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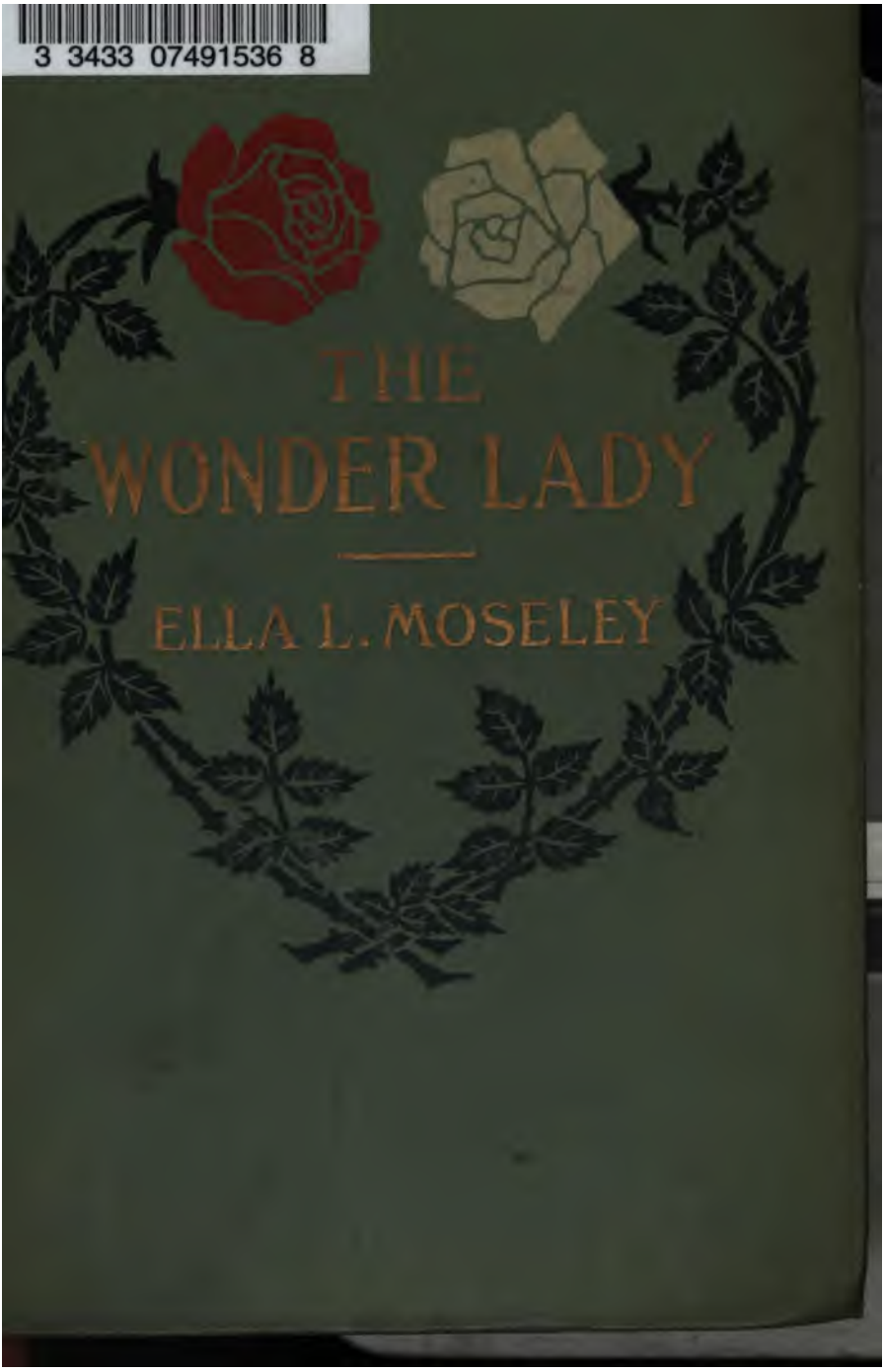

THE WONDER LADY

ELLA L. MOSELEY

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THE WONDER LADY

"SHE—SHE—WENT OUT AT THE WINDOW," HE LIED VALIANTLY.
Page 38.

THE WONDER LADY

BY

ELLA LOWERY MOSELEY

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ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GOSS

L. C.

BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.
[1911]

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THE WONDER LADY

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TO

MY WONDER LADY

CALLED

Marguerite:

AND TO ALL THE HAPPY PEOPLE WHO
NEVER "SORTER LET THINGS GO,"
BUT ALWAYS MAKE SURE

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The Wonder Lady

CHAPTER I

KERRY

THERE was once a little boy who was bound to his bed forever and a day. (Yes, this *does* begin after the manner of a fairy story. It needs must, because it is just like one, though several people could tell you it is altogether true.) His mother was dead; his father, a gloomy person seen mostly in the shadows of morning and evening, or in the wakeful hours of the night, and who was powerless to help when pain, like a strong man, seized and twisted the child's frail body. Even such a dim father would have been some

comfort through the long, lonely hours of the day, and a guard against the hateful, peremptory ogress who haunted the room. But promptly at six every morning, he was hurried off by the whistle of the cotton mill where he worked. Then would begin the mill's low humming, which roared in the boy's sensitive ears like a cataract. Soon after, the ogress would come in. She was only the widowed sister of the man who lived in the other side of the house; and a good woman, though queer, who, as far as her narrow circumstances, and narrower nature, would permit, acted the part of nurse to the boy. Her heavy step, her strained expression, her sharp voice frightened the child. Her quick movements, when lifting him, caused him pain, and when he cried out, she scolded. If ever he asked questions, she snapped him up. He

would have liked to talk with her sometimes, though she was an ogress.

He had no friends — all the children near his own age worked in the mill. He had no toys, no playthings, no picture books; not even a dog, or a kitten; nothing to fill the long weary hours of the day. Sometimes he counted the flies that crawled over the coarse white counterpane; sometimes, the telegraph poles and wires that he could see through the window opposite his bed; sometimes, the motes in the sunshine that streamed in. Once he used to look at the green rim of a mountain beyond the low, smoky roofs; and picture the country on the other side, where he had lived before his father sold the farm, and came to work in the mill.

Then Kerry was as active as other boys — indeed, he was unusually well developed and robust. That is how, at the time of his acci-

dent, though but eight years old, he was on horseback, going to the city on business for his father. That was two years before, but it seemed ages to the boy since he had run about the farm, waded in the brook, fished for minnows, and climbed trees for hickory nuts. He never looked at the mountain rim now: but at the sky, and tried to picture the green fields on the other side of that, where his angel mother walked. Somehow, he had come to believe he would never again see the country beyond the mountains; never leave the ugly little room; never cease to hear the sullen hum of the mill until he heard the angels.

All this was in the intervals between his pains. When they came, he could not think; he could only sob and moan.

But the good Fairy came at last. It was a bright morning in April. Outdoors, the spar-

rows were chattering merrily. The invalid child did not hear them, for the hum of the mill — besides, he was weeping. The sunshine which fell through the side window, stretched half across the room, like a golden banner of hope; but its brightness was painful to the child's eyes, and he held one thin hand over them as he wept.

That is why he did not know how long her slender, gray clad figure had stood there, just inside the door, with her lovely face, her soft dark eyes, and sweet mouth smiling upon him, from a halo of light gray veiling. He just happened to take his hand down, and saw her, mysterious, beautiful, and tender. His heart leaped painfully. He gasped. Though out of his desolation and pain he had been wishing for this, he was frightened. Yet only for a moment. Then he lifted his head, and quavered out bravely: —

"Are you Death? I'm ready."

The visitor, for a moment, was dumb, marvelling at such an expression from so young a child. Then with a little cry of pity, she came quickly to his bed, where he lay, a thin, fair shadow of a child, with brown eyes, pleading and wistful.

"Is it so bad as that, little man?" she cried. "Is it so bad as that? Where is the pain?"

"It's gone now," gasped the boy in astonishment, at the lovely human face bent over him.

"That is nice," she said brightly, as she pulled a chair to the bedside. Then she took a small package from her hand-bag. "See what I have brought you," she said, and began putting some colored discs on a tin rod. In a moment, she set to spinning upon the chair the most wonderful top he had ever seen.

"Why, it's like whirlin' rainbows!" he cried. In his excitement, he lifted himself on his elbow too quickly, and fell back with a groan, his face white, with drops of sweat on his brow.

"Ah," she murmured, "the good-for-nothing pain! Where is it now?"

"In my back, an' side, an'—all through me," the child sobbed. Suddenly he grew quiet, his pain again banished by his astonishment, as her soft, cool hand slipped under his collar, and glided gently up and down his back.

"Tell me," the young lady said brightly, "which do you think would be worse—to have the pain, or to be thrown into a lion's den?"

The boy's drawn face relaxed into a smile. That was such a funny question.

"Why, I'd ruther have the pain, I reckon," he answered.

"I know of somebody who was thrown into a den of lions."

"I know, too," the boy replied proudly. "I heard of him when I went to Sunday School in the country. He wuz named Daniel."

"Correct," approved the charming one. "What do you suppose he said when he found himself among the lions?"

The child thought for a moment, with his sad brown eyes fixed on the young lady's encouraging face.

"Maybe," he began slowly, "maybe he said, 'Down, you beasts, God won't let you hurt me.'"

"Why don't you say that to your pain?" laughed the lady, in delight, at the boy's quick fancy.

He did not laugh.

"I used to pray that God would take 'em

away," he said piteously. "They come oftener every day."

"Ah, it takes courage to be a Daniel," she said: "to hold out against a pain, or a wicked old king, or anything else that oppresses one." Then the beautiful one sighed, as though she had to hold out against some kind of a pain.

At this moment, above the hum of the mill, a heavy step sounded in the hall. The young lady, with a surprising change of countenance, as if frightened, started up, and for a moment seemed looking for a hiding-place. Kerry did not wonder. It was the ogress who now opened the door and came in.

CHAPTER II

KERRY WRITES A LETTER

THE young lady's fright was over at once. She turned to the ogress a smiling face, in which a keen observer might have detected some amusement. The woman's heavy step was out of all proportion to her small figure. She was garbed in lilac calico, made with a close-fitting basque of antiquated fashion, and a full gathered skirt the hang of which was unclassable. Her hair, thin and sandy in hue, was pulled so tight into its knot at the back that the skin of her face was drawn. Her severe, important, eager expression, inappropriate to the humble affairs of her life, sat upon her trivial features with a like incongruousness.

For once, she was smiling, and Kerry was not surprised. Even an ogress must smile in the fair Presence, who bowed to her and smiled so prettily, then turned to him and said: —

"This is a friend of yours, I'm sure."

"No," answered the child, stoutly; "but" — he stammered, with a blush — "she comes, and does things for me."

"Then she is a friend, of course," exclaimed the young lady, with a smile for the ogress. "I noticed how clean and fresh everything is."

This well deserved compliment, and Kerry's ungrateful tribute also, passed unnoticed by the ogress, who was consumed with curiosity about this strange visitor.

"My name is Mrs. Althea Dale," she said pointedly.

"What a pretty name — Althea!" In-

deed, it was a pretty name as the girl pronounced it. "There is a flower by that name. Did you ever see it?"

"Not as I knows of," replied Mrs. Althea Dale sourly. She had expected to hear the name of the visitor; who, evidently, at this moment, was less conscious of herself and Mrs. Dale, than of the invalid boy.

"We were talking of Kerry's pains," she explained, "and of how to fight against them. I was just going to tell him of a wonderful doctor when you came in—Dr. Edgar Marsh."

"Do you know *him?*" ejaculated Mrs. Dale, her little round grayish eyes stretched wide.

"I have seen him," the young lady answered. "He knows, so I hear, all about little boys, from their heads to their toes. I believe he can cure you," she told Kerry. "He will

come to see you, I feel sure, if you will write him a letter. Can you write?"

"A little—"

"Do you know," burst out Mrs. Dale, "whether he is goin' to marry that Miss Raeburn, or if he is goin' to let all that money go to cats?"

"What is that?" the young lady inquired absently. She was fixing a way for Kerry to write, with some paper and a pencil, which she had taken from her bag.

"Do you mean to say you never heerd of old Mrs. Raeburn's will?" demanded Mrs. Dale, tartly. To her, such a lack of interest was inexcusable.

"Tell me about it," the young lady said, with an appeasing smile, as she put a piece of cardboard, the pencil and paper, in the child's hands.

"Well," began Mrs. Dale, and bridling

with her superior information, she sat down near the foot of the bed, " that will is the most cuyous I ever heerd of. She willed him all her fortune, and a tremendous one it is, if he marries Miss Raeburn. If he don't, it's all to go to the foundin' of hospitals for cats. What do you think of that? "

" I think she likes cats," the young lady answered with a smile.

" I think she is a fool! " snapped Mrs. Dale.

The girl's pretty dark brows lifted ever so slightly.

" It makes me unhappy to think such things of people," she said, in a gentle tone.

Mrs. Dale stared at her, mystified, but her overwhelming curiosity about things which did not concern her soon prompted another question.

" Maybe you know Miss Raeburn." Then

she sat with her mouth open, expectant, while the young lady, with her head bowed, thought a moment.

"No," she said at last, and with a faint flush, "I cannot say that I do."

"I've heerd that he don't want her, because she is overbearin' and proud."

"Perhaps she doesn't mean to be," the lady replied. "How is the letter, Kerry?"

"'Mos' done," was the reply, cheerful, but faint from a stress none can fully understand but some other sick child, with clumsy fingers, trying to write, flat on his back, and to whom spelling is labor and sorrow.

"Why don't you write the letter yourself?" questioned Mrs. Dale, in a disagreeable tone.

"Because I think it better for him to write it," was the gentle reply. "Finished already? How fine!" she exclaimed with a pleased laugh, which made the child proud of him-

self. Then she read, but to Mrs. Dale's disgust, not aloud: —

"DEARE DOCTOR; I am a littel boy what has been lame in bed two years it wuz falling from a howse what done it an sometimes I dont sleap all nite the pain is so bad the doctor said I wont never be any better an he quit comin, but the ladie says you know everything wont you pleas come and see. If I wont be better sometime?"

"It is a nice letter," the young lady declared. "He'll come just as soon as he gets it, I'm sure. I'll mail it myself. Now let us have a party."

She took from her bag — it was remarkable how many things she had in that bag — a napkin, and spread it on a chair. Then she took out an orange and some little cakes.

Mrs. Dale got up, and started out.

"Why, aren't you coming to the party?" asked the young lady, in a gracious surprise.

"I ain't got time. I've got to go to my sewin'," was the crabbed answer, and she marched out.

To Kerry's surprise, the young lady began to laugh. It was such a clear, bubbling laugh that he joined in; but he stopped when she whispered:—

"Isn't she funny?"

"I think she's hateful," Kerry replied, and clenched his fists.

"No, she's funny, and she's to be pitied, too, because she doesn't know how enjoyable it is to keep in a good humor."

"I — I believe it is," he answered, a little shamefacedly, "but she wuzn't nice to you."

"She didn't mean anything," the young lady laughed. Then she began supplying

him with portions of the orange she had peeled.

When presently she said, "Now we are going to have a secret, just you and I," he felt able to keep it forever.

"Here is a card with my name and address," she continued. "You must not let any one see it. Only, if at any time you urgently need me, give it to your father, and tell him to come for me. Until then, keep it secret. I've a most particular reason for not wanting any one to know."

"They sha'n't," Kerry declared, his brown eyes glowing. He slipped the card into the pillow-case under his head. "I'll not look myself. Then I kin say I don't know."

"Oh, if any one asks you, say it is Miss Day — just Miss Happy Day."

"Miss Day—just Miss Happy Day."—*Page 18.*

CHAPTER III

MISS HAPPY DAY ACQUIRES A NEW NAME

NO sooner was the visitor gone, than Mrs. Dale returned, with her sewing in her hands. Before across the threshold, she demanded: —

"Did she tell you her name?"

"I didn't ax her," Kerry replied, in a spirit of mischief so new that she stared at him.

"You stupid boy!" she exclaimed, much disappointed.

"Why didn't you ax her?" Kerry questioned over a book which the young lady had given him.

Mrs. Dale regarded him with an irritated air.

"Goodness knows I hinted for it strong enough," she said. "She didn't want to tell it. Well, she needn't be afraid I'd want to associate with her."

"But she told me," volunteered Kerry gleefully.

"What is it?" snapped Mrs. Dale, a flush staining her sallow cheeks. "Why didn't you say so at once?"

"Miss Happy Day. It's a purtier name than yours," Kerry declared.

"Humph! fancy, too fancy," and Mrs. Dale set her thin lips primly. "Worse, it's sacrilegious. It's the name of a hymn. I'll bet she's no good."

"She is!" cried Kerry fiercely, and would have thrown his book at her, had it not been the gift of his new-found friend. "I don't

want you in here if you say things like that."

"I warn't goin' to stay, nohow. You ain't needin' anything. I reckon I'd take up for her, too, if she'd given me everything I wanted. Humph!" she continued, as she went back to her own room, "mealy-mouthed thing, goin' round with a veil on. I've seen her like before."

The arrogance of an ignorant and narrow mind is as pathetic as comic. Though of the same sex, race, and city, Paris itself was hardly more remote to Mrs. Dale than the world from which the young lady of "sacrilegious" name had emerged. The self-confidence, the delicacy, the fine ethical appreciation, reflected in Miss Happy Day's voice and manner, were as provocative of suspicion as her neglect to introduce herself. Fortunate it was for Mrs. Althea Dale's peace

of mind, that she knew not the secret of the card. Already it was impossible for her to sit and sew in comfort. Presently, remembering that she had told her pastor's wife of Kerry's pitiable condition, she rose from her machine, and hurriedly put on her black alpaca and little turban of faded brown straw. Then she wrapped up an unfinished garment about which she might pretend the need of advice, and sallied out to inquire if Mrs. Stewart knew anything of this strange young lady.

This errand took her to the suburb where she had lived before her husband's death, and where she still attended religious services, because she felt herself above the church to which factory people went. The way was long — past factory settlement, past furnaces, railroad yards, past the business section, and at length down two miles of hot and dusty

road, but she pursued it with unflagging spirits.

Mrs. Stewart, however, knew no one by the name of Happy Day, and had spoken of Kerry to but one young lady, who was fair, blue-eyed, and charming — a very different person from her described by Mrs. Dale as "sassy," brown as a "merlatter," and with impudent black eyes.

Crestfallen, but with a curiosity unabated, Althea trudged back home. It was the noon hour. The operatives were pouring out of the mill, and hurrying down the little lanes between the houses to get their dinner. Her brother and his four children, for whom she kept house, were waiting for theirs. As soon as she had shared with them an uncommon treat, bread and canned salmon, which she had bought on her way, because she knew there would be no time to cook anything, she

ran across the street to the little drug store on the corner. Ten minutes later, she burst into Kerry's room, breathless, but elated.

The child lay gazing through the window, at the distant blue rim of mountain beyond which his father's farm had been. And the hum of the mill sounded in his ears like the murmur of the brook that ran through wood and meadow. He knew that the farm was sold, but after the manner of a child, he dreamed that his father would get it back in some way. Since the wonderful thing which had happened this morning, no dream seemed too great to come true. The opening of the door, the form and face which followed, jarred on his mood. He picked up his book and began to read, with a cunning early acquired in his relations with Mrs. Althea Dale.

"Oh yes, I told you so!" she cried. "It's

just a fancy name. It ain't in the telephone book, nor the d'rect'ry neither."

"What ain't?" asked Kerry, over his book.

"Happy Day! That's what."

"It ain't?" Kerry repeated plaintively, his little face troubled. It did look as though her name ought to be in the telephone book, or in the directory, at least. Then he remembered the card safely hidden in his pillow-case.

"No, it ain't," Mrs. Dale repeated. "I knowed there was somethin' wrong about her when I seen her comin' up the street with a veil on. I never was ashamed to show my face in public, and no right sort of woman is. Happy Day! Humph! The name of a hymn. A pretty sort of name for such as her to have."

"Oh, go long," said Kerry, whose face had lightened. "I don't keer if she ain't got no name at all. I'm goin' to call her the 'Wonder Lady.'"

"Wander Lady, that suits her," replied Mrs. Dale.

Kerry did not hear that. He was reading, and had just come to where Alice in Wonderland was swimming about in the pool of her own tears, which seemed so funny that he suddenly laughed aloud.

At that extraordinary sound in the sick-room, Mrs. Dale's hard face softened.

"Well, she's done you good," she muttered. "Maybe she's all right anyhow. I ain't one to think evil of people. But I'm goin' to look out."

Kerry raised his eyes and looked at her.

"You won't find out nothin'," he said. He was thinking of the card, and that Mrs. Dale should not see it, if he had to swallow it.

CHAPTER IV

ANOTHER SURPRISE

THE Wonder Lady had said she would come again next morning. Kerry believed this with all his heart, but the pains had been severe that night; and though he had fought them with a courage which proved the rousing in him of some heroic strain of blood, he was too faint and weak to quite live up to his belief.

"Do you reckon she will come, sure 'nough?" he asked plaintively. It taxed his courage to ask this of Mrs. Althea Dale, who was sweeping fiercely with the stub of a broom. She wore her bright blue calico dress, made with a basque. Her sandy hair was

twisted tightly on the back of her head. In a sharp, querulous voice, she was complaining of the obstinacy of Martin Hall for attempting a woman's work, when he did not know enough to sweep in the corners, and under the bed. Kerry wanted to defend his father, but was afraid.

"Do I reckon she'll come?" she snapped, without a pause in her work. "I reckon she will, if the police don't ketch her."

"The police!" cried the boy, "why—" and his voice broke.

Mrs. Dale stopped her broom, and looked at him. She could see only his little tremulous mouth and his yellow hair. His thin hand covered his eyes.

"There!" she snapped, "don't be a cry-baby. I was just talkin'. What are you holdin' your hand before your eyes for?"

"The sun hurts," he said timidly.

"You just want to complain, but I'll pull the shade down."

She went to the window, and jerked at the shade, which came tumbling, roller and all, down on her head. Mrs. Dale flew into a violent rage.

"You nasty, confounded, dog-goned—" but indeed, it would be impossible to give all the epithets which she flung at the inanimate cloth and wood. Kerry trembled, as he lay there and watched her. Suppose she should turn on him that way.

Her passion gone, Mrs. Dale dragged the kitchen table in, put on it a chair, which she mounted, and replaced the shade. The sun still fell across the floor in a blinding glare.

"I reckon you'll have to stand it," grunted Mrs. Dale, as she began to drag the table back.

"I heard somebody knock," Kerry said eagerly.

"Don't be so anxious," said Mrs. Dale. "Fine folks like her ain't out of bed yet."

"I did, I did, — you listen."

Sure enough, some one was knocking; and it was the Wonder Lady, who entered, in the whitest of dresses, with her dark eyes aglow, and her red mouth sweet with smiles.

"Has the doctor come yet?" was almost the first thing she said, in a manner which caused Mrs. Althea Dale to purse her thin lips.

"He ain't apt to come this early," she replied in a caustic tone.

The Wonder Lady seemed not to hear. Half across the room, she turned to the window.

"The light hurts your eyes," she said in

her soft, tender voice. "I will pull the shade down." It was a slight pull, but down the shade came again, crushing the pink roses on the Wonder Lady's hat.

What did she do but laugh, to the surprise of Kerry, to the disapproval of Mrs. Althea Dale.

"I don't see what you're laughin' at," she said. "I jest put that shade up."

"What's the use of crying?" laughed the lady.

"About as much as there is in gigglin'," snapped Mrs. Dale. She stalked up to the table and began to drag it to the window. Refusing the Wonder Lady's offers of help, she mounted the chair, and hung the shade again. This time she did not roll it up.

"There," she declared vindictively, "you can hang all the way down. I'll pin you up when it gits too dark."

The Wonder Lady was beside Kerry. She was smoothing back his hair with her soft, cool hand.

"Did you sleep well last night?" she asked.

The child hesitated. He was learning another lesson from her. "What's the use of cryin' ?" he thought.

"Yes, ma'am," he said at last.

The Lady looked at the shadows under his big brown eyes.

"Ah," she cried softly, "you're becoming a Daniel already. Listen," she said. "Is that an automobile I hear?"

Kerry did not hear any noise except the hum of the mill, and Mrs. Dale, dragging the table into the kitchen.

"Have you had your breakfast?" asked the Wonder Lady.

"I didn't want any," Kerry said.

"Don't you think," she said coaxingly,

" that you could eat a wee little bird that I cooked for you myself? "

Couldn't he! His eyes glistened as she took from a box some toast, and a quail delicately broiled.

" Eat it with your fingers," she said. Mrs. Dale had said, to his disgust, that boys who ate with their fingers were pigs. More and more was this a Wonder Lady.

" Who told you about me? " he murmured, between delicious mouthfuls.

" A little bird," she said playfully.

Kerry laughed. He had never heard of such a thing before.

" You'll never believe how I *did* hear of you," the Wonder Lady next said. " It was through Mrs. Dale."

" Sure 'nough? " cried the boy, and he stopped eating, incredulous. How could such happiness have come through Mrs. Dale!

"Mrs. Dale is all right," said the girl, in her kind, warm voice, "just a little rough on the outside, like a chestnut-burr. Many people are like chestnut-burrs on the outside; but inside they are like the meat — isn't that a nice thing to know?" She stopped and listened apprehensively for a moment. "What's more," she went on, "if you are only nice to them they'll shed their burrs sooner or later. That's one way to be a Daniel." Then she gave Kerry a Japanese napkin to wipe his fingers on, and to his astonishment, began to sing softly: —

> "'Many giants great and tall,
> Stalking through the land
> Down upon their face would fall
> If met by Daniel's Band.
> Dare to be a Daniel —'"

Her voice, so sweet, so full of courage, drew Mrs. Dale in, bringing reluctant tribute.

"I reckon you ain't got any troubles, Miss, or you couldn't sing like that."

"Haven't I?" laughed the Wonder Lady. "I have the worst of all troubles." And she stopped laughing. "I try to forget it. I try to make others happy, to do as Jesus did. You know, He was hated by those He loved, He was abused and afflicted, but He forgot it. He tried to make people happy." She blushed, as if preaching were new to her.

The next moment she started up. "Don't you hear an automobile?" she asked. Then, at a loud knock on the door, she darted behind the head of the bed. It was a cheap bed of oak, but the head piece was tall and solid, and hid her completely.

CHAPTER V

"WHAT WOULD YOU WISH TO DO MOST OF ALL?"

THE child burst into a laugh. Mrs. Althea Dale was so horrified that she could not go to the door. There was a second knock, then she opened it to Dr. Edgar Marsh.

He was tall, firmly built, and bore himself like an athlete. He wore a gray suit, and a necktie as blue as his eyes, which were blue and bright as the sky on a June day. The other features of his smooth face were just as fine, but somehow you never saw anything but his eyes.

"You look very happy for a sick boy," he said, then glanced at Mrs. Dale, whose face

was strained with suspicions that she could not reconcile with the manner in which the Wonder Lady had been talking before she jumped behind the bed.

"I wuz laughin' at the Wonder Lady," gurgled the boy, then bit his tongue, because he had almost told on her.

"At whom?" questioned Dr. Marsh, looking steadily at Kerry.

"The lady what told me to write to you. I call her the Wonder Lady. But she ain't — er," he stammered, and stopped at the look in Mrs. Dale's accusing eyes.

"That's a good name for her," replied the doctor, heartily. "She's the most wonderful, most mysterious person I know of. You are not the first sick boy she has put into my hands, through a letter written by himself. But I never see *her*. She has always just gone: yet sometimes I feel her influence so strongly

I could almost believe her hidden in the room."

This was too much for Kerry. He dropped his eyelids, and a faint flush stole into his thin cheeks.

"I felt that way just now," said Dr. Marsh, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, and another glance at Mrs. Dale. (Why she did not expose the Wonder Lady then and there, nobody knows till this day.) "I dare say she is hiding right behind the bed head."

Kerry caught his breath. Suppose the doctor should look!

"She — she — went out at the window," he lied valiantly.

Dr. Marsh broke into a laugh.

"Good for you, my boy!" he exclaimed. "Now let's see what's the matter with you."

He asked a few questions, and won Mrs.

Dale's heart, and enlarged Kerry's appreciation of his crabbed friend, by praising the care and cleanliness to which the little invalid's freedom from bed sores was due. Then he started to turn Kerry on his face in order to examine his spine, but desisted because of the pain the boy suffered.

"Never mind," said Dr. Marsh, "we will get at it a better way."

He went out of the room for a few moments, and returned with a good sized black box in each hand. From these, he unpacked the several parts of a Röntgen Ray apparatus. Of course Mrs. Dale and Kerry stared. And when Dr. Marsh explained that he was going to take a picture of one of the lower joints of Kerry's backbone, they thought him a magician.

It was not strange that Edgar Marsh had brought this apparatus with him on his first

visit. Kerry's letter, which spoke of a fall, and of lameness in bed for two years, had given him cause to think it would be useful. He was one to do things thoroughly at the start, so he had brought it along. He quickly adjusted the apparatus, slipped the plate under Kerry's lumbar vertebrae, and held the tube in front two or three minutes. Then he packed it all up again.

After this he got out his stethoscope, and listened to Kerry's heart, first with one ear, and then with the other, and for so long that Mrs. Dale became restless.

"You're goin' to tire him out," she said tartly, but Dr. Marsh paid no heed.

As for Kerry, he was not tired at all. It was the longest examination he had ever had, and there had been several; but never before had he been examined so gently, so tenderly, so patiently, as now. Never before at the

end, had he heard such an enlivening question as:—

"What would you like to do, most of all?"

"Sir?" answered the child, doubting his ears.

Dr. Marsh repeated the question. His blue eyes were never brighter.

"To go fishin'," said Kerry.

"You may, next spring," was the smiling reply.

"Really and truly?" cried the boy, "oh, oh, oh!"

"I wouldn't be surprised," replied Edgar, as he wrote a prescription.

Kerry's brown eyes were suffused with love and gratitude.

"I wish I could help *you* to do what you would love to most of all," he said.

"Ah, my boy," said the doctor gravely, while the light seemed to fade in his eyes,

" there is but one who can help me do that, but I'll tell you what it is. It is a hospital for invalid children. The weak ones should lie on a bed by the window and look out at green trees, at tame deer on a lawn, and at a fountain flashing rainbow colors from the sun; the stronger ones should sit in chairs under the trees, or by a brook, and watch the fishes swim. There should be tops and marbles and all sorts of games; and rolling chairs for all who could not walk. There should be a little garden plot for those to tend who could. When they were hungry, sweet-faced women should give them rich soup smelling of thyme, and creamy yellow milk. They should have the sweetest of bread to eat, and more besides, to feed the pigeons and squirrels. Do you see that mountain rim? " he asked, in his enthusiasm suddenly turning to the front window. " Over beyond in the valley is where I

"I WISH I COULD HELP *YOU* DO WHAT YOU WOULD LOVE TO MOST OF ALL."—*Page 41.*

want the hospital to be. You don't hear a mill humming there; nor the noise of carts on cobble-stones; nor the bang and rattle of electric cars."

"That's where my father's farm is," said Kerry, with a quiver of his delicate chin.

"Room enough for both," said Dr. Marsh, smiling. "It is a long valley."

"When are you goin' to have the hospital?" Mrs. Dale asked.

"I don't know," he said, with a return of his grave manner. "I don't yet see my way clear to getting the money. It will take such a lot, you know."

Mrs. Dale pursed her lips. She wanted to ask him why he did not marry Miss Raeburn and get the money, but she did not dare.

Kerry thought of that, too, but somehow, young as he was, he knew it was because the doctor did not love Miss Raeburn.

The girl behind the bed must have known, too; for when Dr. Marsh had gone, she came out, her eyes shining as if with admiration, her cheeks red as a rose.

"Did you hear 'im?" Kerry cried. "Fountains, squirrels, rollin' chairs, and all? I wish I could help 'im."

"Ah, who would not wish to help him!" softly cried the Wonder Lady. "I did not know he was like that!"

"Would you mind tellin' me," burst from Mrs. Dale, "why you jumped behind the bed that way?"

"Why," said the Wonder Lady with a queer little catch in her voice, which ended in a laugh, "Why, I've made a vow not to let my left hand know what my right hand does."

"Humph!" Mrs. Dale looked as sour as possible. She did not believe a word of that.

"It didn't do anybody any harm," the Lady pleaded softly, "and it made Kerry laugh."

To both assertions, Mrs. Dale had to agree, but she was far from being satisfied.

CHAPTER VI

DR. MARSH'S OPINION OF MISS HAPPY DAY

IN Mrs. Dale's opinion, Dr. Marsh had shown a curiosity like her own, concerning this "Wonder Lady." He had called her "mysterious." He had said he suspected her of concealing herself at other places. A man as intelligent as he, with his opportunities, would surely have learned something definite about her in the half-week which had elapsed since his last visit. Mrs. Dale, therefore, on the morning he was expected again, drew her little rocking-chair out on the porch in order to question him, and not be overheard by the Wonder Lady, should she be hiding behind Kerry's bed.

It is evident that Kerry had managed the concealment of the Lady's card so effectually that Mrs. Althea Dale did not even suspect its existence; or she could never have worked button-holes so tranquilly. For a full hour she sat there, blinking in the sunlight, her ferret nose turning a deeper and deeper pink. She was half suffocated by the dust with which the east wind enveloped her whenever a dray or wagon rattled down the yellow street. None of these things disturbed her. The Wonder Lady came, as dainty and sweet as a flower, in spite of the veil so objectionable to Mrs. Dale. She went in unattended, for Mrs. Dale was straining her sight past the little drug store on the corner, around which she expected the doctor to appear.

As it happened, his smart automobile whizzed round the other corner of the block, so swiftly that before she knew it, he was

coming up the steps, his gloves in one hand, the other lifting his hat from his dark hair as politely as if poor little Mrs. Dale were the President's wife herself. The eager, breathless manner in which she jumped up and faced him, brought a look of concern to Dr. Marsh's face.

"Is Kerry worse?" he inquired.

"No, he's better — Doctor!" she gasped, as he started in.

He turned expectantly.

"Doctor, have you found out that lady's name?"

"Why, hasn't she told you?" asked Dr. Marsh.

"She told Kerry it was Miss Happy Day. Now that's just the name of a hymn. Besides it ain't in the telephone book, nor the d'rect'ry neither."

"That's nothing," said Dr. Marsh, lightly,

with an amused smile. "The name suits her, and it is a Happy Day when she appears."

"But what do you think of the way she does, veilin' herself all up, and hidin' — "

"I've heard," said Dr. Marsh mildly, for there was something in her manner that he resented, "of One who said, 'let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.' "

"That's what she said, but what does she want to go to such extremes for? "

"Oh, it is just a whim, I fancy," Dr. Marsh replied, his smile broadening. Mrs. Dale's little round head, straight waist in its tight basque, and full gathered round skirt, was a topsy-turvy human interrogation point, if ever there was one.

"Humph," she sniffed. She had no more use for whims than for giggles. "It ain't proper, and there's somethin' wrong when a young girl takes to slippin' around corners,

and dartin' behind beds and doors whenever she hears a sound."

"My good woman," Dr. Marsh said, "The Wonder Lady's way is a little unusual; but if you knew some of the eccentric people I do, you would think nothing of it." His tone was light, though he was thinking of his aunt and her absurd will about cats. "Let us go in to Kerry," he concluded, in a manner which caused Mrs. Dale to hurriedly lead the way.

Kerry was not lying with his hand over his eyes this morning, though the room was full of light. He was watching the door.

"So the Wonder Lady hasn't come yet," Edgar said; for he thought he knew the signs: sparkling eyes and hopeful voice.

"Yes, sir, she has," Kerry piped happily.

His eager manner was all for the doctor. "See what she brought me!" His shrunken little hand held out a small box of fish-hooks.

Edgar whistled. "This is taking me at my word sure enough." He began to get his stethoscope from his case. "How is my little fisherman this morning?"

"Better," said Kerry, with a grin at his new name.

"Better in mind," thought Dr. Marsh, looking at the dark circles under the boy's eyes. He applied his stethoscope over Kerry's heart, and listened, first at the base, then at the apex, then along the edge of the breast bone. He could not hear the faint, systolic murmurs of his first examination. They must have been accidental, and not organic, he thought.

"Better, sure enough!" he exclaimed de-

lightedly, and lifted his head. "I must see your father. Tell him I am coming again Sunday."

"My father doesn't like doctors," the child cautioned, with a painful flush. Suppose he had hurt the doctor's feelings! Certainly, to judge by Mrs. Dale's twisted features, he had.

"Why doesn't he like doctors?" Edgar inquired cheerfully, as he put away his instrument.

"I think he'll like you," Kerry answered with a deeper flush.

"That's all that is necessary," Dr. Marsh assured him, with a smile at the anxious little face. "Tell him I'll be here Sunday afternoon. Now let us do some fishing." He tore a few slips of paper from his prescription pad, twisted them loosely, and scattered them on the bed. Then he tied a hook to a piece of

"How is my little fisherman this morning?"—*Page 51.*

twine that he found by the pillow, and gravely began to fish for the twisted paper. Soon he caught a piece and landed it.

"Now you try," he said to Kerry, who also succeeded in a few minutes.

"The Wonder Lady said I could do it," he gurgled in delight. "She was fixin' to show me how when you come."

"Ah!" The doctor smiled, and glanced at Mrs. Dale, whose little nose was elevated at this frivolity.

"But she's gone this time," Kerry explained. "She went out through the kitchen."

Mrs. Dale jumped up, and went into the kitchen to see. Suddenly, Kerry stopped fishing.

"Doctor," he said wistfully, "are you — are you —"

"Well?" Edgar smiled encouragingly.

"Are you goin' to marry that Miss Raeburn?"

"I don't know, my boy," Dr. Marsh answered dully. So his aunt's will was gossiped of even here. No wonder: it was infamous enough. Then with sudden interest, he asked kindly:—

"Who told you that?"

"Mrs. Dale," Kerry said.

"Oh!" Edgar's face brightened. "Does the Wonder Lady know about it also?"

"She didn't until Mrs. Dale told her," replied Kerry.

"And what did she say?"

"She said—she said—your aunt mus' be fond of cats."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Edgar merrily. "Tell me," he said, "what this Wonder Lady looks like."

"Oh!" cried Kerry, his brown eyes glow-

ing, "she has hair dark like the blackbird, only it's sof' and fluffy. An' her mouth is red as his wing, an' her eyes are sof' like a dove's — an' — she's comin' Sunday evenin' too. Doctor!" he added in a wistful voice, which said as plain as anything, that Kerry wanted his Wonder Lady and his doctor to meet.

Edgar laughed again, and patted the child's fair head.

"I axed her to come," said Kerry, "and talk to my father. You know, doctor, my father never smiles, and he don't talk none. But I think after the Wonder Lady talks to him, he won't be quite so miserable."

"I suppose not," Edgar assented, with a surprising amount of feeling. "I suppose not."

The truth was that this mysterious girl had kindled his imagination in a manner

painfully incompatible with his serious endeavor to love Miss Raeburn. Yet the glimpse of a lithe figure vanishing past corners, the soft swish of a gray skirt through a closing door, the suggestion of some perfume too delicate to declare itself fully, — these were the only tangible evidences he possessed of her, except her real name. One faithless little rascal had suddenly held before his eyes the card which she always entrusted to her protégés, so that any one in vital need could send for her. The name was "Winifred Beach." It was unknown to Dr. Marsh, but he thought it beautiful.

He had not seen her address, it being on the other side of the card, which, at his command, the little traitor had concealed at once. Edgar not only wished to rouse the boy's honor, but he respected the young lady's "whim" — a whim which, though it amused him, but

added to her charms, and these were many, he was sure.

His annoyance at his aunt's endeavor to force him into a loveless marriage, aided in attributing to the Wonder Lady more graces and beauties than perhaps even she possessed. How unlike, he would often reflect, his self-inflated aunt with her inhuman love for cats; how unlike the cold and haughty Miss Raeburn, with her "Helpers of Joy"—a club which he knew to be devoted to social frivolities, since Felicia Raeburn was its organizer and president. Would she give a Sunday afternoon to the invalid child of a factory hand? Dr. Marsh thought not. Would she go day after day into all sorts of humble and miserable abodes? And if, by any chance, she once should do this, would *she* endeavor to conceal her identity? Dr. Marsh thought not. He knew her well

enough for that, though he had never met her until after his aunt had announced the contents of her will. For Felicia was not his cousin, but Mrs. Raeburn's niece by marriage.

This day, as he went his rounds, he began to hope that on Sunday afternoon, some happy accident might bring him face to face with the Wonder Lady. Then he chided himself. If he did not marry Felicia Raeburn how would he ever get that hospital? But if he did marry her, would he get it? Would Felicia Raeburn sympathize with his one great dream? He had never thought it worth while even to mention it to her. Now the Wonder Lady —

Here he began to question if it would be any harm to go very early Sunday afternoon, if he could so manage, leave his automobile at some distance from the factory village, and

wait in Kerry's room for the young lady to come in upon him unawares.

Sunday morning found him still playing with this temptation. The afternoon saw him yield.

CHAPTER VII

THE FATHER'S FAULT

EARLY as was the hour that Edgar had set for his arrival, the Wonder Lady came first. It was a quiet scene upon which she entered, the door being open. Hall was reading to Kerry from the Sunday paper. Mrs. Dale was there also, in a chair leaned against the window-sill, watching the father in a manner which revealed the secret of her devotion to his boy. The room smelled strongly of the pipe at which the reader puffed, now and then. From the other houses there floated in a confusion of voices, in laughter and speech, instead of the hum of the mill, as on other days.

The child, from his pillow, saw her first.

"Oh!" he cried, impulsively, in delight and admiration. Beautiful were her soft dark eyes under the nodding red roses on her hat, and against the pale blue of her muslin gown, beautiful were the living red roses she had brought to him.

Hall dropped his paper, put down his pipe, rose to his feet, and awkwardly came forward. He was a small man with mouse-colored hair and large brown eyes. His face had the tight drawn look which is seen often among farmers: but it was unlike these in a pallor caused by confinement in the mill. It was further distinguished by a dulled, dazed air, — as of one who suffers from having unintentionally committed some great wrong, or imagines himself bowed beneath a pitiless fate. It was a face to haunt one, as it did the Wonder Lady in her sleep. She said so afterwards. The

pity which it stirred in her now, made her beautiful face divinely soft and tender.

"So this is Kerry's father," she said with such charming grace one would have thought Kerry a prince.

"Yes, Miss, I'm certainly glad to meet you," Hall replied in monotonous, dull tones, strangely in character with his expression. "I've been wantin' to tell you how much I appreciate what you've done for Kerry. I never thought to see him lookin' so happy and hopeful again."

"It is a pleasure to do things for Kerry," the girl said. "He says such bright things," she continued over her shoulder. She was putting the roses in water. Then she placed the pot on the bureau in the corner opposite Kerry's bed, so that he could look at them.

"Has the doctor come?" she asked, in

the uneasy manner in which she always put this question.

"No, ma'am," Hall answered.

"I reckon he ain't out of church yet," clipped out Mrs. Dale, implying "that's where you ought to be." This absurdity nobody understood but Kerry, who made a face at her.

"Do you know what that doctor wants with me?" the father asked. "It's because Kerry begged me, I stayed." With white, coarse hands on his knees, he sat stiffly in his chair, though he drooped at the shoulders.

"I don't know," the Wonder Lady returned prudently; for she imagined Dr. Marsh's wish. "You'll not be sorry," she assured him in the warm, bright quality of voice which was peculiarly hers. "You'll not be sorry."

"I know he won't," echoed Kerry.

"And I'll not be glad. I've had enough of doctors," Hall said bitterly. "I've spent all I had settin' round in the waitin' rooms of hospitals, and hopin' against hope, some one of 'em would cure him like they said, and him growin' worse all the time." The girl noticed that his hands trembled. What a story of prolonged anxiety they told!

"But Dr. Marsh does the most wonderful things," she assured him.

"How does he come to know more than the rest of 'em?" he demanded in a dull voice.

"It is not knowledge, but skill," the girl declared earnestly: "his exceeding great care, his conscientious regard for trifles, his untiring patience, his temperance in all things — his skill, I said," her voice grew richer, her eyes brighter — "Ah, what *is* skill, but God in the heart?"

The tight muscles of his face seemed to grow tighter.

"Now you're talkin' of somethin' else I don't believe," he said.

"Oh!" cried the girl, "I'm so sorry." And she was, with a sorrow that was personal. If he didn't believe in God, how should he believe in man? — especially the one man whom she thought could heal Kerry.

"Maybe you don't know," Hall explained, apologetically; "maybe I oughtn't to tell you. Sometimes I wish I hadn't been told."

"It won't affect me," she protested, with a smile. "What is it?"

"Our foreman told me. He's got an awful lot of book-learnin'. He sets readin' histories way up into the night. He says all them heathern people had a Trinity, too, of some kind or another; and that we who think ourselves so much finer, worship the same sort

of bloodthirsty and revengeful God they did."

"I don't," said the girl, in her soft voice. "The God I worship is all goodness and love. And when your foreman has read enough, that is the kind he will worship."

"John Fallow is a pretty somebody to talk about God," Mrs. Dale snorted. "There ain't a meaner man in town."

"Ah," the Wonder Lady murmured, "what a pity! It is the pure in heart who shall see God. Jesus himself said so. Tell me," she cried with sudden fire, "whose way do you think better, your foreman's, or the way of Jesus?"

"Of cose, Miss," he remonstrated humbly, "that wuz a good Man; but I ain't a-goin' to say I believe he wuz anything else."

To this sweet girl, so imbued with the Word, it could seem no wonderful thing that the

Word once became flesh. But how should this piece of clay understand? It was something of the spirit of Paul, when he said, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," in which she blundered (as perhaps you will say):—

"It does not matter what you believe; the devils believe, but they are shut out from the sight of God. It's what you do. It's what you are."

"I'm not a bad man," Hall instantly said: "I don't git drunk, nor lie, nor steal, nor swear."

"I never thought you did," she exclaimed, a delicate blush staining her cheek. "Sometimes it is what seems to us a very little thing — a habit of temper, perhaps, or of slighting our work; sometimes the *failure* to do some little thing."

Hall interrupted her with a sudden upward

look of pain, which grew into suspicion, as it encountered an incriminating stare from Mrs. Dale.

"I've done my best for the boy," he declared angrily. "I sold my farm and spent it all on him — I —" he suddenly rose to his feet and walked out of the room, in the long high step of his farm days.

The girl, dismayed, looked to Mrs. Dale for explanation.

"He blames 'imself for Kerry's hurt," said Mrs. Dale, with a curious little triumphant air. "He put 'im on a horse to go to town. One of the saddle girths was worn, but he thought it would hold, Kerry being so light. But it didn't. It broke, and the saddle slipped, and Kerry fell. Somethin' in the bushes, a calf or hog maybe, that the horse half saw, made 'im shy. And when Kerry fell, the horse kicked 'im in the back. Martin

says he ought to have tended to the girth. I think so, too. That's his fault; he's slipshod in his work. He thinks just anyhow will do. You touched *his* tender spot."

The Wonder Lady shrank as if the wound were hers.

"I didn't mean to," she lamented. "I didn't know, and I wanted to help him."

"I don't reckon you will," retorted Mrs. Dale sharply, "until you talk different. How could you say it don't matter whether we believe on the Son of God or not?"

"That is not what I meant," the Wonder Lady answered: "it was, that we should give more thought to our deeds, and worry less about our creeds. If you can get people to act like Jesus, they will come to believe on Him. And when they believe—"

"What church do you belong to?" in-

quired Mrs. Dale abruptly, with what she called a slur in her voice.

The Wonder Lady looked at her a moment quietly, then began to laugh.

"Suppose you guess," she bubbled.

"You don't belong to any," snapped Mrs. Dale, and she stalked from the room.

The girl turned anxiously to Kerry. He had asked her to help his father. She had failed miserably. But Kerry's thought was all for her.

"My father wuz not mad with you," he said. "It wuz Mrs. Dale. She's always tellin' 'im it wuz his fault."

"Oh!" cried the girl, "why will people hurt one another so? A thing over and done with should be forgotten." Then a deeper distress shadowed her lovely face. In what manner would the man receive the doctor? She must correct her blunder, try to awaken

in him new confidence in human skill at least.

Through the window she saw Hall on the porch. She started forward, then hesitated. Hall had risen, and was speaking to some one who had come upon the porch. The voice which replied to him was a light, musical baritone.

"The doctor!" the girl whispered, with a suppressed laugh, and ran out through the kitchen door.

CHAPTER VIII

DR. MARSH DECIDES TO ATTEND A DINNER

"I KNOW the Wonder Lady hasn't come this time?"

"Yes, she has," Kerry answered, "and she's gone."

"Oh!" was the disappointed exclamation. Then Edgar saw that he would have known at once, but for the vile odor of Hall's pipe, which had killed the fragrance of the red roses on the bureau. He knew that fragrance too well. The red rose was Miss Raeburn's favorite flower. He was sorry the Wonder Lady liked them too.

"How is the little fisherman to-day?" he asked, as he seated himself by Kerry.

"Better," was the reply.

At the foot of the bed Hall stood, his colorless face set in hard lines, as if he considered the doctor's playful manner unwarranted trifling. "The man who does not like doctors," Edgar thought, as he turned to him, and asked:

"How do *you* think Kerry is?"

"He seems better," the man admitted reluctantly.

"He's going to get well. That's what I want to talk to you about."

"I have heard that before, but he never gits any better; instid, he grows worse." Hall set his lips.

"There is no reason why he should not get well," Edgar replied earnestly.

"If it's an operation you're talkin' about," Hall said, "I'll never consent. He's been operated on one too many times already." Then he droned out a story such as every

doctor with wide experience has heard — a story tragic with its burden of anxiety and deferred hope; and pitiful, as an illustration of the limitations under which even the most conscientious of physicians labor.

"If we could only be divine!" Edgar thought, as he listened gravely.

"It was a difficult, a complicated case," he said, when the man had finished.

"Is it any easier now?" was the abrupt question.

"Yes," Edgar replied promptly. "Kerry is so thin that I believe you could locate the trouble with your fingers. But I didn't rely on that. I took a picture of it. You've heard of the X-ray, haven't you? I brought my apparatus along, as perhaps Kerry told you, and made a picture of the lower part of his spine. Here it is." He rose, and held the radiograph before Hall's eyes. "There you

see three of the lower joints of his spine. The upper two are all right, but look at this irregular knot on the other. That is where the fracture was. If Kerry had not been a country boy of unusual development, the fragments would have been shelved apart, the spinal cord would have been pierced, or crushed, resulting in paralysis, or death. But on account of the muscles and ligaments of the back being so well developed, and because he was kept in bed so long, too, the fracture healed of itself. Nature poured out so much repair material that it bulged over. Usually, such an excess is absorbed, and the knot disappears. But Kerry's functions became upset through the close confinement, the nutritive processes were interfered with, and the knot, instead of being absorbed, has continued to grow. All the time, it has been pressing more and more on the delicate nerve

roots, and now on the cord, until Kerry is almost paralyzed in the lower part of his body. He will be, unless that knot is removed. If it is removed, he will soon be well; and at length, able to run, jump, and do all that other boys do."

Edgar's voice was so confident, his manner so simple, his explanation so full, that, though Hall did not understand it all, he was favorably impressed in spite of himself. A faint color spread over his face. His prejudice, however, came uppermost.

"They said there warn't no bones broke," he replied.

"There was nothing to let them know," said Edgar. "The muscles and flesh over that part of the spine are too thick. The broken parts were kept in place by the stout ligaments which, in Kerry, were well developed because he was a country boy.

Your first doctor, however, did all he could have done had he known there was a fracture. He kept the boy in bed."

"Why didn't some of them others make a picture, too?" Hall asked, with a little more warmth.

"That I cannot tell. Perhaps they did not think it necessary."

"But you thought so," Hall answered, a look of admiration creeping into his face. "It makes me think of what the Wonder Lady wuz sayin' before you come, about the failure to do some little thing amountin' to so much, sometimes. She *said* you always looked after the little things—"

"Did she say that?" interrupted Edgar in a pleased tone; then hurried on: "As I said, Kerry can be restored to health by a simple operation" (it seemed so to Edgar), "and I hope you will consent to it."

Indeed, he hoped so. To relieve suffering was always a joy; and if at times this joy was greater, it was in giving relief to such sufferers as this child, who lay there, silently watching them with an eager, fearless look on his thin face: but to heal the child, and also to justify the kind words of Winifred Beach — well, a man could hope for nothing greater.

To this hope, this enthusiasm, Hall could not rise. Instead, his faint glow of confidence had already vanished.

"He's been operated on before, and made worse," he said. "What you say sounds reasonable, but I remember that the other doctor sounded reasonable too."

"Think it over," Edgar advised hin cheerily. "You don't have to decide tl minute."

But on leaving, Edgar drew the man outside the door.

"I must speak to you plainly," he said. "This operation is vitally necessary. Without it your boy may live two or three years, but in different stages of torture. With the operation, you give him every chance to be a well boy, healthy and strong — in six months, or a year at most."

Hall glanced at him apprehensively. He had not thought of Kerry's dying soon.

"If he hadn't been operated on before — " he said, dragging his words — "Are you sure this will turn out as you say?"

"Sure as any operation, sure as life itself. You or I might die to-morrow. As far as human knowledge goes, it is sure," returned the doctor, patiently. He pitied the man.

Hall shifted his feet.

"I'll have to think about it," he said, in a

lifeless voice. "I'll have to think about it."

Edgar saw that further talk was useless now: but he went away undiscouraged. He did not believe that, with the prospect of Kerry's restoration to health, the man would continue to oppose the operation. For this, Edgar's mind had already begun to plan. He would have Norwell, an authority on the heart, to administer the anesthetic. He would manage to get Roland's operating rooms, which were better lighted, more suitably appointed than his own. Roland's were barbaric enough: there were not the walls of marble; the enamelled floor; the operating, instrument, and bandage tables of enamelled iron, which he would have in that Children's Hospital of his. Ah, that Hospital! with its happy conditions for convalescents, its perfect system of baths, douches, electric

appliances, and all — when would he have it?

These thoughts irresistibly led Dr. Marsh to remember the dinner the next night at his aunt's, which he had been trying to forget. This dinner was an awkward, quarterly function, which, by the terms of his aunt's absurd will, he had to attend, or lose an unwelcome bride, and a lot of very welcome money, without which he could not hope to build the hospital for children.

Awkward as these dinners were, as revolting to his pride, he had never missed one yet. Invariably, he had on hand some such pathetic case as this, which so sharpened his longing for the children's hospital, that however many were his vows not to attend the dinner, in the end he would cast them all aside. This he did now, and once again with the resolve to constrain himself to love Felicia Raeburn.

CHAPTER IX

DR. MARSH TRIES TO BE AGREEABLE

YOU may have noticed that Dr. Marsh was without the heavy professional manner which some doctors, especially young ones, think they must assume. It was a manner he never had except when in the presence of his aunt and of Miss Raeburn. Then it was an involuntary pose: the unconscious reflection of his great desire to impart to his aunt the understanding that although cats were very well in their way, human beings were better; or of his hope to impress Miss Raeburn with the truth that life was a serious problem, and not a play.

A fixed and formal gravity always began to

possess him the moment he reached the house. This overlooked the city, from the side of the low mountain, beyond which he hoped to build his hospital. It was a massive, red brick house, with a high aggressive front; the whole reflecting Mrs. Raeburn's cross, obstinate, domineering character as truly as did her heavy black brows, her Roman nose, and square projecting chin.

Sight of the rotund black butler, who opened the heavily ornamented door, and who by long imitation had acquired Mrs. Raeburn's own self-important and overbearing expression, did not lessen Dr. Marsh's gravity. Neither did the loud mewing, which drew him, wearing a countenance which Æsculapius himself might have envied, into the sitting-room, and the presence of his aunt, of Felicia Raeburn, and of divers black and white Angora cats.

Mrs. Raeburn was a stout woman, with deep blue eyes that peered sharply beneath her black brows. To-night, she wore a dark purple silk dress of ancient cut. She sat in a high chair in the center of the grayish-toned room, and held herself very erect. Through a pair of rimless eye-glasses, which stood far out on her nose, she was watching Felicia and the cats.

Near the mantel, of drab marble, Felicia stood, tall and slim. Her dress was white, falling in straight lines. With the cats circling about her, or rubbing against her skirts, the girl in her cold, dark beauty, might have been a young priestess of the Egyptian moon goddess. On a small table near, were a tray with saucers and a jug of cream; and these, not Felicia, had excited the homage of the cats. She was filling one of the saucers when Edgar came in, but before the reeded cur-

tain had fallen behind him, she had put the jug down and come forward, some of the cats beside her, some remaining by the table. Her movement was that of welcome, but the visitor saw none in her still, passionless face.

Mrs. Raeburn's perception was clearer. "Quick ears," she muttered, as she turned in her chair, and spoke to him first.

"Punctual to the minute," she said. Her blue eyes looked at him keenly. Her deep, throaty voice was edged with sarcasm. Edgar knew this manner referred to his cravenly doing just enough to keep within the terms of the will, and no more. Well, he was now determined to fill all the requirements.

"Punctuality is an important asset in my profession," he answered vacuously, as he kissed the tips of her pudgy fingers. He smiled his best as he turned to Miss Raeburn, but it

was like a sickly gleam of sunlight on a winter day.

In a soft, yet formal voice (an unprejudiced observer would have thought the softness natural, the formality unnatural) the girl uttered merely a variation of his own platitude:—

"Punctuality is an important asset in any sphere," she said with a smile somewhat like his own, though Edgar did not know this. It was artificial, he thought, and quite the proper accompaniment for her "icily regular" face, her cold finger tips, the remote hauteur of her whole manner.

As soon as she had spoken, she went back to the cats, and not too soon. The air was hideous with their wailings for supper.

When she had filled the saucers, and placed them on the hearth, the greedy creatures all tried to lap from the first which she set down.

But with playful taps of her white fingers she pushed them apart, and made each cat drink from his own saucer. All the while, she was scolding in a low, crooning voice, or breaking into little bubbles of girlish laughter. It was a pretty transformation, but her softness, her grace of movement, did not appeal to Dr. Marsh. Disdainful, from his seat across the room, he looked on the situation as typical of the frivolous nature which lay beneath Felicia Raeburn's cold, sedate exterior.

"I've had to let Felicia feed my pets since my rheumatism has been so bad," Mrs. Raeburn explained, after a comprehensive survey of her nephew's uncertain front; then began to recount her symptoms. To these, Edgar replied with grave advice, his baritone changed into a profound bass. He knew too well that these complaints were another sort of reminder that his dilly-dallying about the

marriage had continued long enough. What made it more embarrassing, his aunt knew that he understood. Whether Miss Raeburn understood, he could not tell. She had taken a low chair beyond their aunt, and he could see only her beautiful profile. He judged, however, that she was a trifle wearied, or bored, as she watched the cats lap their cream.

Mrs. Raeburn, having complained to her satisfaction, also began to watch the cats.

"Their dinner is late," she said presently. "Felicia was late coming home from her club."

"The Helpers of Joy?" Dr. Marsh asked with an assumed interest. "How is the club getting along?"

"Splendidly," replied the girl, and she granted him a full view of her face, a sudden glimmer of her serene dark eyes.

"I wish you would tell me how to become eligible to membership," he said, feeling like a hypocrite. "I have, as you know, been opposed to society. But lately, I have reached the conclusion that if I can find time for it, an occasional diversion of that sort will refresh my mind, and help me to do my work better."

"I am sure it would," Felicia replied (of course *she* would say that, he reflected); "but unfortunately for us, the club is made up entirely of women." Her voice was suddenly full and warm; her eyes glimmered more brightly; a flush increased, if that were possible, the beauty of her cheek. Such a glow, such an exhilaration was always produced in her by the bare mention of the "Helpers of Joy."

In spite of himself, Edgar's expression changed. What orgies of gaieties that club must represent!

As suddenly did Mrs. Raeburn's heavy face change.

"Let us go in to dinner," she croaked so severely that one would have thought they, and not the cats, were responsible for the delaying of dinner, which had been announced some moments earlier.

As usual, Dr. Marsh offered his arm to Mrs. Raeburn, she being the elder, and somewhat infirm. As usual, the old lady, with an imperious gesture, bade him take in Felicia. Dr. Marsh was accustomed to turn to the girl with a sort of frozen smile, and she, without a smile, without a look, and with her young figure stiffly erect, would place just the tips of her fingers on his arm. Then, impeded more or less by cats, they would proceed on their way, which, though only into the next room, always seemed to Dr. Marsh a *via dolorosa* a mile long. Mrs. Rae-

burn waddled close behind her victims, with her ears open for their fatuous remarks, which, though so fatuous, seemed entirely appropriate to the occasion.

This was the order at present; though Dr. Marsh, not yet fallen from his resolve, attempted an easier manner, and the pretence that to have this uncongenial girl on his arm, and to keep in with her languid tread, was what he wished to do most of all, now, and forever more.

"Do you not allow even one man in your club?" he asked.

"No, not one," laughed his companion.

"Is not that selfish?" he complained, as he stumbled over a cat.

"It is only precaution," laughed the girl. "It is a secret society. No men are admitted because they do not keep secrets well."

"Indeed! I thought it was the other way," and he joined in her laughter.

"That is false," she declared, "like many other things we take for granted."

They had reached the table, and the butler was drawing back a chair for Mrs. Raeburn, while Edgar was placing Felicia. Just then, he saw that Mrs. Raeburn was beaming upon them in a manner which suggested her vision of a marriage altar in the immediate foreground, and he sat down with a face like a man at a funeral.

"What are some of the other things we take for granted?" he asked heavily, looking not at Felicia, but at the centerpiece of the red roses which were *her* flowers, and which he detested.

"For one thing," she replied in a low voice, "the notion that the world is made for grief. That is what you think, is it not?"

"Not exactly," he retorted. "Neither do I think it made altogether for joy. That is what you and your friends think, is it not?"

"The Helpers of Joy?" she laughed, and looked at him gaily. "We certainly do. We should be ashamed to reflect upon its Maker by thinking anything else."

"Felicia! What levity!" Mrs. Raeburn put her soup spoon down, and stared. "What do you do in that club, anyhow?" she demanded.

"You know, auntie, we are pledged not to tell," Felicia remonstrated softly. "But I may tell you our motto, if you want to know."

"Of course I do. I'm tired of so much mystery," Mrs. Raeburn complained, with an uneasy glance at her nephew's solemn face.

Felicia took note of it too, as she smilingly answered:—

"It is, 'I count the sunny hours.' I saw

the line on a sun-dial once, and took it for my motto. I count the sunny hours, and forget all the others. When the club was looking for one, I suggested this. It was adopted unanimously."

"Humph!" grunted Mrs. Raeburn, "I'd want to be something more than a sun-dial."

The girl laughed, a happy satisfied laugh, which she checked suddenly when Dr. Marsh, in his heaviest manner, asked:—

"My dear young lady, what is to become of the poor mortals who have no sunny hours to count?"

"Oh!" she cried with a fine impatience, "I do not believe there is any human being who has not some sunny hours to count. It is a matter of choice, of will."

"I can prove you are mistaken, if you will accompany me some day when I go on the round of my poor patients. Will you?"

He had surprised her. She caught her breath, and hesitated.

"You might go to-morrow," the foolish old woman broke in.

"I don't know," Felicia replied, after a second glance at Edgar's gloomy countenance, "I don't think I care to go, if you will excuse me. Do you meet with nothing but sadness? Find no bright spots, nothing to awaken joy?" She asked the question eagerly, her red lips parted, an intent look in her still, dark eyes. Evidently she wanted him to say "Yes."

"I do," he answered strongly, then plunged into an animated account of the Wonder Lady's work among poor and afflicted children, and he kept it up through the entrée of sweetbreads which he did not eat, and the roast chicken which he did.

The ladies heard him in evident astonishment. Felicia, scarce eating, and with a flush

in her cheeks as red as the roses over which she surveyed him calmly, yet with eyes which sparkled. This manner he did not quite understand, but he decided she was offended at the reproof which his example doubtless conveyed to her, though he had intended none. The truth was, when he began talking of the Wonder Lady he forgot himself.

His aunt listened with open impatience, but with an appetite unabated, though one of the cats had climbed into her lap, and kept poking his head at her plate. Obviously, this girl, held up by Edgar in such flattering terms, was too unlike Felicia. Besides, Mrs. Raeburn was one who blew a trumpet before her when she gave alms.

"How extraordinary!" she exclaimed several times.

"Yes," Edgar continued, glowingly; "for a young girl, beautiful and cultured, and

ONE OF THE CATS HAD CLIMBED INTO HER LAP, AND KEPT POKING HIS HEAD AT HER PLATE.—*Page 96.*

therefore greatly courted, to attempt such complete self-effacement — it is not only extraordinary, it is glorious."

"Nonsense," his aunt snorted. "How do you know what she is like when you have not seen her?" And she pushed the cat's head away from her plate.

"I know," replied Edgar, his look again on Felicia, whose color was subsiding, "that she is beautiful, by the admiration which I see in the children's eyes when they speak of her; that she is young, by the ease with which she gains their confidence; that she is exquisitely refined, by the effects of her appearance in the meanest home. Purely circumstantial evidence, I grant you, but sufficient."

"For a sheep's head," croaked his aunt, glowering at him.

"Thank you," Edgar responded gravely, but unoffended. He was used to such pleasant

epithets from his aunt. Moreover, he felt guilty. Then, as he saw that Felicia did not laugh, he smiled.

"Have you really never seen her?" the girl asked in a softened manner, which surprised him.

"Not once; but I may see her before long," said Edgar. "There is one child she is greatly interested in, whom I will have to operate on. He has no mother, nor any other female relative to look after him. She may undertake to do it."

"What do you imagine she looks like?" Felicia asked, in the same kind tone. Edgar came near to loving her at that moment. Really, he had never imagined that her eyes could look like that — mysterious and tender, as if condensed from many summer midnights.

"I will tell you what the boy says," he

replied, — "the one I must operate on. Kerry, that is his name, says she has hair the color of the blackbird; that her lips are red as his wing; that her eyes are soft as a dove's. He calls her the 'Wonder Lady.'"

Mrs. Raeburn looked at Felicia — at her hair which itself was black as the blackbird, and at her beautiful red mouth — as if to say, "That is like you, Felicia." Edgar, moved by hope, and the girl's sudden kindness, looked at her too, but the illusion would not hold. She was herself once more, with an exquisite face, to be sure, "but faultily faultless — a dead perfection, no more."

Mrs. Raeburn's watchful eye comprehended Edgar's look.

"Felicia, why don't you go into charity work?" she abruptly demanded.

"My time is all occupied at present," the

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girl answered in a cold voice, her eyes on her plate.

"With the Helpers of Joy?" was Dr. Marsh's wicked question. As before, at the mention of this club, a sudden brilliance flashed into Felicia's face, and her voice swelled, as if at the thought of pleasure.

"That does occupy a good deal of my time," she said.

Mrs. Raeburn's broad face was the hue of the rose tomato in lettuce leaves, which had just been placed before her. From under her heavy black brows, her sunken eyes shot an exasperated light from one to the other of this perverse couple.

"Have you seen yet any location where I can build my hospital for cats?" she demanded of Dr. Marsh, in a hoarse rumble.

"I know of one which is an excellent loca-

tion for a children's hospital," he said coolly, "but I shall not tell you where it is."

"I can find out," she growled.

"Your country home would be a good place," and Felicia's brilliant voice broke into a laugh, heartless and mocking, Edgar thought. "The grounds are large — you will want plenty of space for the cats to play in."

"It will do, if I find nothing better. I can make additions to the house. I'm going to see about it before long. I'll not have some ungrateful relative upsetting my plans after I'm dead. And I don't know how soon I may drop off. I've felt this rheumatism pretty close to my heart lately." She began to recount her symptoms, and kept it up all through dessert, to what appeared to be a thoroughly unsympathetic and disaffected pair. Dr. Marsh responded in solemn monotones. The girl was silent, but he judged

from the glimpse he caught now and then of her bright eyes that she would have laughed had she dared. All his dislike for such a light-hearted, unfeeling girl came over him again. To think that she could laugh, when she knew as well as he did that, although this scheme for a hospital for cats was as yet only a coarse weapon to force a marriage of incompatibles, the dotish old woman was perfectly capable of giving all her fortune to dumb and soulless brutes.

Relief came at last. The ladies rose from the table. He took his aunt's arm, she this time unresisting and groaning, and helped her to the door. As he held the curtains apart, she stopped, and pushed Felicia through first. Then with a conscienceless change of manner, she said in a loud, stage whisper: —

"The 'Helpers of Joy' — that club you were objecting to — it doesn't amount to

anything. Nobody ever hears anything about it."

"So much the better," replied Dr. Marsh, heartlessly.

Alone with his coffee and cigars, he asked himself why he ever came to the house at all. It did not soothe him, at present, to remember that it was because of his hospital for children. Assuredly, he would never have come had he not only felt that the money ought to be his without conditions, he being his aunt's nearest of kin, but also that Felicia Raeburn loved him. His reasons for this last feeling seemed scant enough at times. Often he doubted them altogether. Were girls, as a rule, pale at the approach of the men they loved? Their finger tips icy to his touch? Exceptional girls, of deep sensibilities, *might* be affected thus. But Felicia's heart was as

light as her careless laugh. Yet she *must* care for him in a fashion. She did not want to build a hospital; besides, she possessed a fortune in her own right. Furthermore, she might have escaped from the embarrassing situation, dinners and all, by living in another city, with an aunt of her own, who could not be more intolerable than his Aunt Lucy.

This supposition, however, did not quite please him. After all, his Aunt Lucy had some worthy qualities. She had an affectionate heart, a forgiving mind, and a sense of justice which he had always admired until, on account of the larger part of her fortune being derived from her husband, and of Felicia Raeburn's being *his* nearest of kin, this sense of justice had induced her to make the infamous will. Infamous indeed. No other word could describe it. His sense of honor forbade him to marry a girl whom he did not

love. It would be an injustice to her — to say nothing of the violence to his own feelings.

At this point he always decided that his Aunt Lucy was really intolerable; and that Felicia, since she did not need to stay, clearly did so from some interest in him. It was a relief to think this. It lessened difficulties. He did not scruple to hope that she did care for him, whether he ever learned to care for her or not. Whatever her feeling was, it would never cause her to lose any sleep.

He had lighted his cigar the third time, when he began to wonder how Felicia could bear the sight of him. They had never even seen one another until after Mrs. Raeburn announced the contents of her will. He had always been at his worst. Even to-night, though he had intended to be pleasant, he had behaved like a half-formed boy — rather like a semi-barbarian. Did Felicia also appear

at *her* worst? Strange, he had never thought of this before. In Heaven's name, how could anybody be natural in the presence of Aunt Lucy who would never cease to declare, by word, look or gesture, that she expected them to marry each other. It was enough sometimes to throw a sensitive girl into hysterics. That might account for Felicia's too easy laugh. There was something in the girl so to endear her to a captious old woman. He himself had caught glimpses of what might prove hidden beauties of character, but these glimpses had always been so transitory as to seem unreal afterwards. Of this nature was her kindness about the Wonder Lady, the flush in her cheek, the softness of her great dark eyes. Edgar imagined the Wonder Lady looked that way all the time. Did she also possess Felicia's beauty of line and color?

"Ye gods!" he muttered, "that beauty warmed by the Wonder Lady's character, and such a woman for a wife—" the thought made him dizzy.

"I am losing my senses," he said. "President of the 'Helpers of Joy,' forsooth—a girl with no higher ambition than that—who shrinks from the suggestion of pain and suffering as she did, when I asked her to go with me, some day, on a professional round."

Having doubted his estimate of the girl, however, he resolved to prove the doubt if possible. He threw aside his unfinished cigar, and went into the sitting-room.

His aunt was in her usual seat near the middle of the room. She was fondling two of the cats, which were in her lap. Another was rubbing itself against her extended foot. He was glad to see that no cats were near Felicia, who sat reading at the other side of the room.

If he had to marry her, he would not want her to be forever playing with cats.

Evidently she had been reinforcing her courage also. She put her book down and smiled at him, faintly, but in a manner very friendly. He crossed over to her.

"Will you sing for me?" he begged in a manner quite easy and debonair, though it was the first time he had ever made the request unprompted by Mrs. Raeburn.

"Of course I will," Felicia replied graciously, and rose at once.

CHAPTER X

FELICIA SINGS

NEITHER spoke as they passed into the music room. Edgar was thinking that after she had sung, he would take her out on the verandah. There, where the lights of the grimy town gleamed dim below a haze of smoke and dust, he might find himself able to tell her how he wanted to build a hospital in the sweet valley over and beyond the mountain.

He opened the grand piano and stood at one side, where he could watch her. Felicia took a sheet of music from the stand, and placed it on the rack so unhesitatingly as to suggest either that she had selected her song

in advance, or that its selection was of no importance. Dr. Marsh inclined to the latter view. The manner was her own, significant of her careless attitude to life. His heart began to sink. It sank more as the girl, with easy touch, played a vivacious, staccato prelude, and then sang "The Thrush and the Finch," by D'Albert.

It was a dainty ballad — a tapestry in song, of birds singing for the dance of flowers on a lea, and symbolical of cheerfulness and kindness. To Edgar, the words were childish; the light, joyous tune, typical of the heedless character which he attributed to the girl.

"That is very pretty," he said perfunctorily, when she had finished. "Thank you."

Felicia turned to him a face in which the spirit of the song still lingered.

"Ah," she murmured, "you didn't like it very much."

"No," he replied, frankly. "Is it not somewhat — er — rather frivolous?"

"No, just simple," she disagreed. "It is very hard to get the right kind of songs." Her pause, and her bright, dark eyes seemed to wait, or at least to hope, for his concurrence. But Edgar looked at her blankly. He thought of two or three songs that were the right kind, but before he could mention them the girl continued: —

"So many of what are considered the best songs, are merely the expression of regrets, of complaints, of tears, or of mawkish sentiment."

Edgar looked blanker still. He was glad not to have mentioned "Love's Old Sweet Song," nor "By the Sad Sea Waves" — songs his mother had loved. With covert impatience, he pushed away one of his aunt's cats, which had wandered in, and was rubbing

itself against his foot. He was indignant at this shrinking from all that was not gay and joyous, and he remonstrated rather hotly: —

" If we should take the minor chords from music, the shadows from pictures, the pathos from poetry, what would become of art? "

" Leave them to art, then," cried the girl with a pretty outward fling of her hand, " but take them out of daily living — they are not wholesome! That, I fancy, is what your Wonder Lady is trying to do." Her manner softened. She leaned a little forward. " Tell me more about her. I was so much interested."

" I think I told you all at dinner," Edgar replied more calmly. The rose-scented night air stirred the curtain behind him, and he thought of the verandah, which he had forgotten. She might be interested in his hospital since she was interested in

the Wonder Lady — if she really was. She must be, he decided, by the strange eagerness with which she asked: —

"Do you not even know her name? Tell me."

"I do," he said gently; "but I discovered it by accident. The secret is not mine."

Felicia looked at him a moment silently, and with a pink glow in her cheek.

"You are right," she said approvingly, then turned to the piano, and opened the pages of another song.

"Won't you sing 'When Love is Done'?" Edgar hurriedly begged. This was a song with some feeling in it — not one like her first.

"Why, certainly," Felicia responded in a manner which was grave for her. Possibly she thought this song also was mawkish

and sentimental. There was certainly an absence of feeling, he decided, almost a trace of levity in her manner as she sang: —

"'The night has a thousand eyes,
The day but one;
Yet the light of a whole world dies
With the setting sun.

"'The mind has a thousand eyes,
The heart but one:
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.'"

The notes fell from her parted lips, as round and finished as pearls, but as cold, as hard. Yet her voice, a rich mezzo soprano, was appropriate for such a song. "What a pity," Edgar thought, as he looked down at her beautiful face, where he failed to detect any sign of emotion, "what a pity — a sweet voice, beauty, grace — everything lovely here combined, except a soul."

When she had ended, Felicia turned to him with a smile in which he fancied a shade of mockery.

"You are disappointed again," she said. "I am not artist enough to disguise my own feelings so as to give such a song the proper expression. You see, I do not believe what it says. The light of the whole world does *not* die with the setting sun, which is still shining on the other side; and the light of a whole life does *not* die when love is done — at least mine wouldn't. I should still find happiness and light, if *love* were done."

"No doubt, no doubt," Edgar thought, with the verandah's possibilities fading utterly from his vision. He should like *his* wife to grieve if she found his love growing cold; but of course he did not say this.

He met the challenge in her smiling face with another appeal to art.

"It is fortunate for poetry that your philosophy is not that of women as a whole. There would have been no Elaine, er — er —" his mind reached out randomly into the haze beyond his years of medicine — "er — no Ariadne."

"Well, Ariadne consoled herself," the girl laughed. "I don't mean that I would act as she did; but that other things would satisfy." She paused, hoping, perhaps, that he would ask her what things.

He did not need. He knew already.

As if she resented his silence,

"Oh!" she cried, with a proud flash of her dark eyes, "I *could* be one of the sighing, pensive kind, but I *choose* not to be!"

Worse and worse, thought he: for one

to deliberately crush out all that was delicate and sweet — without sentiment or feeling, without tenderness or pity — such a woman would be ruthless in the pursuit of her own happiness.

"I hope nothing may ever interfere with your choice," he said gravely. "Sing something else, please." For a moment she sat looking at him intently, as if she had not heard his request.

"Please sing something else," he asked again.

"No," she said, with a cold smile, "you don't really want to hear me."

"But I do," he protested. "You know I love music."

"Perhaps you do, but you don't want to hear *me* sing. You don't want to hear a girl sing of whom you have such unkind thoughts."

Edgar colored with embarrassment which he tried to pass for indignation.

"It is unkind of you to supply my thoughts," he protested stiffly.

Felicia had risen: "Let us return to Aunt Lucy. We shall be quarreling in a moment. Then I could never, never put up with you again. I cannot bear quarreling."

Edgar, as he followed her into the other room, was indignant in reality; and with good reason, he thought. "Put up with him," indeed! He'd see himself coming to the house again. As for quarreling — he had said nothing, and thought nothing that was not true.

There was one indignant sure enough, when she saw by their faces that her cherished hope was still without prospect of fulfillment. Mrs. Raeburn fairly glared

at them; and it was a frigid parting that she granted her nephew.

"Why must you act like an old curmudgeon?" she hoarsely muttered, as he bent over her hand extended to him across the inevitable cats. "She is not natural when you are here. You wither her."

Edgar lifted his brows protestingly. "Good-by, Aunt Lucy. If you do not feel better soon, let me know."

Evidently, as soon as he had passed through the door, she turned on Felicia. He was getting his hat, in the hall, when he heard this: —

"Why can't you be yourself when he is here? Why don't you let him see what you are?"

"It's no use, Auntie," the girl replied languidly. "He is a veritable Greek."

"Nonsense. What do you mean?" Mrs. Raeburn demanded.

Edgar, scorning to linger for the reply, hurried out. As he stepped into his car, a merry jingle from the piano told that Felicia had returned to it. Then followed her voice, clear and light, in a ballad from Lucrezia Borgia:

> "It is better to laugh than be sighing,
> They are wise who resolve to be gay."

The words and the strain followed him like a challenge, a defiance, as he drove along under the stars. He sighed heavily. How ineffectual and futile it had all been. What folly to have imagined her capable of sympathy or understanding; or even, that in her manner, she cared for him. She had tried by every means to show herself as antagonistic as though he were of foreign breed in reality.

Here he laughed, pretending not to care that she had called him a Greek. Then he began to wonder what she had meant. There was nothing in the modern Greek character to make her epithet justifiable; as for the ancient — he was no pagan, but Christian and orthodox — *that* she knew. Then he tried to recall some of the proverbs which reflected other phases of the Greek character: such as, — "When Greek meets Greek," and "Beware of the Greeks bringing gifts;" but in none of them could be read any sensible application to himself. Her meaning may have been frivolous, but it was not pointless — she was too intelligent for that.

Later that night, it suddenly came to him that a certain Message was to the Greeks foolishness. This interpretation of her epithet was so absurd that his mind

continued to dwell on it with a sort of ironical delight. Had she a message for him? The message of gay living, which *he* thought foolishness?

Presently, he sobered. She was capable of such a profane application of Holy Writ. That *was* her meaning, and no mistake.

And he hardened his heart against the girl. More than ever was she the undesired, the repellent. He felt as if he could never ask her to marry him.

CHAPTER XI

DR. MARSH WRITES TO THE WONDER LADY

THE next Sunday, Edgar again went to see Kerry's father, with the hope that Hall had consented to the operation. As he sped along the sunlit streets, he could see, now and then, over the city roofs, where the mountain, beyond which lay the valley of his dream, lifted a long wavering green line against the blue sky.

The dream, this morning, was no less a troubled one than it had been since the dinner. At first, his imagination had rebounded in full to that mysterious girl who was so unlike Felicia. After a few days, however, the serious purpose of his

life again came uppermost. He began to reproach himself for his failure to make an agreeable impression at the dinner, and for his failure since to do anything which might remove that impression. The situation had been difficult enough when he thought Felicia cared for him. Now it was ten times worse. How should she any longer care for the elementary, half civilized creature who had been unable to hide his thoughts from her? How could he regain her esteem? He must do something. And he must persist in the endeavor to care for her, since she was so hopelessly bound up with the purpose of his life.

In spite of this resolution, as he approached Hall's cottage and saw the hem of a skirt, of some thin gray stuff, vanishing through a quickly shut door, his heart

leaped painfully. He laughed a little, as he went up the steps. He had almost surprised her that time, without trying. Sooner or later, they *must* meet face to face — then — Here he whipped in his fancy, and as he knocked at the door, his countenance was as grave as it had been at his aunt's that night.

It could not remain so, however, when he entered the room, which, though she had disappeared, was full of her gracious presence.

On a chair by the door, lay a package and a bunch of red roses, dropped there as she fled before him. Kerry was laughing, as he always did at one of her hurried exits. Even on Hall's gloomy face there was a smile. As Edgar sat down by the bed, he thought he heard her quick breathing back of the head-board.

The thought of her being so near, and of the sympathy and approval which he knew was his, produced in him a pleasant glow. It was, therefore, quite a shock, as he put a thermometer in Kerry's mouth, to find Hall watching at the foot of the bed, with his pallid face set and hard, his brown eyes hostile.

"He has made up his mind against the operation," thought Edgar, but he said nothing until he was through examining Kerry. Then he turned to the father in an authoritative manner.

"Kerry is doing as well as he can under the present conditions," he said.

"He is a good deal better," Hall declared, in the obstinate manner of those determined to resist, whether right or wrong.

"He is in much better spirits," replied

Dr. Marsh, " his pulse is more regular, but the real trouble is unchanged."

" He don't complain any more," Hall answered, in the same combative tone; " he ain't fractious, and he don't wake me up at night with his pains any more."

" That is because he is learning to be brave," Dr. Marsh said, with a smile into the boy's delicate face.

" I am tryin' to be a Daniel," Kerry timidly put in. " The Wonder Lady said I could be one by holdin' out against a pain, jest as Daniel done against the wicked king."

" That's all foolishness," his father said. " He couldn't keep so quiet if he warn't better, and I know he is."

Edgar looked at the man's stupid and obstinate face a moment; then rose and went across the room to the chair where

the Wonder Lady's unopened package lay. This he unwrapped, standing with his back to the bed. An amusing toy it proved to be — a mill, a miller, and his sacks — which took him several minutes to adjust. Then he turned round and held it up.

"See, Kerry," he called.

"Oh!" the boy cried, and half started up in bed; but fell back, gasping on his pillow, with beads of cold sweat on his brow.

Hall ran to the bedside and stood over him helplessly, with face quivering.

"What made you do that? Didn't you know better?" he asked reproachfully.

"I wanted *you* to see," Edgar replied. He came and gave the toy to Kerry. "I hated to surprise you that way," he said to the child, "but I had to make your father understand."

"That's all right," Kerry murmured. "The pain's gone," and he smiled bravely up at the doctor.

"I understood already," Hall muttered, and as though to hide his emotion, went out on the porch. Edgar followed.

"How can you bear to keep him in that condition?" he asked gently.

For several moments Hall did not reply. He stood looking with lack-lustre eyes down the yellow street. Presently he turned.

"One of them doctors talked of his heart," he said inquiringly, and Edgar thought that he had capitulated.

"His heart is stronger," he replied, assuringly. "It will carry him through."

"Do you know it will?" Hall demanded, in his monotonous voice.

"I have every reason to hope so," said Dr. Marsh, with patience. The man's ignorance and unfortunate experience had to be made allowance for.

"You hope so, you hope so," Hall muttered, with his gaze on the floor. "It's your business to know."

"Can you tell what will happen next year?" Dr. Marsh asked. "No more can any man foretell the exact result of an operation. But there is every reason to believe that this would be successful. I would not urge it upon you if I did not believe so."

The man made an impatient gesture. "You ought to know," he said, with a lowering countenance. "You want to experiment jest like the rest, and I won't have it."

Edgar's color rose. There was nothing

of which he was so proud as of his professional integrity, and he controlled himself with an effort.

"I have handled worse cases than this," he responded; "and I offer you my service without cost. If you will not take it, if you do not choose to give your boy the chance of health and long life, it is your affair."

"There ain't goin' to be any operation," the man repeated doggedly.

"Very well, I will go in and get my hat," said Edgar.

But when he had gone within, the mute appeal in Kerry's wistful brown eyes drew him to the bedside.

"You mustn't mind my father," the child whispered. "I told you he didn't like doctors."

"That's all right," Edgar said heartily,

his anger all vanished. Besides, he could almost hear the Wonder Lady breathing behind the bed.

But Kerry wanted to make further amends.

"You kin have some of the roses she brung me," he shyly quavered.

"Thank you, my boy, thank you," Edgar laughed. "But I wouldn't rob you. Besides — " here he hesitated, then spoke with an odd emphasis — "I don't like red roses, but white." His blue eyes twinkled so that Kerry was not in the least hurt. On the contrary, his delicate face fairly shone with love and trust, as he lay gazing at the doctor.

Edgar's heart yearned over him. From over the city sounded the ringing of Sunday school bells; some faint and far, some quite near. The streets were full of boys

and girls hurrying, or else lagging, to obey the summons. From close by, floated in the chatter and laughter of the mill children, in which there was not so much merriment as perhaps some think should result from one holiday in seven. Miserable as was their lot, worse was that of the little prisoner to whom there was never a holiday. Yet, but for the stupid prejudice of his father, he might be released to health and activity. How could the man be influenced? Through Mrs. Dale? That was doubtful. Through the Wonder Lady? Why, of course! At this thought Edgar's face grew bright. If only he could speak to her about it!

But he did not dare, though she was so near; though he had been longing for an event that would induce her to reveal herself. He took his seat, and wrote her

a note on the leaves of his prescription book: —

"My Dear Wonder Lady: — Kerry's extremity must pardon this encroachment on your reserve. In his present condition, he will hardly live three years. A simple operation will, in all human probability, restore his health and give him the chance of a long and useful life. His father is opposed to the operation. Will you not endeavor to win his consent?

"Yours respectfully,

"Edgar Marsh."

"Give this to your Wonder Lady," said he, when he had folded the note. "I can write to her, if I can't talk with her," he continued playfully; "but I don't know if she'll answer."

. . . . . .

"He said he didn't know if you'd answer," piped Kerry, when the doctor had gone, and the Wonder Lady had emerged from her hiding place.

"I'll try," she said; her eyes shining, her cheeks crimson. "I'll try." There was something queer the matter with her voice; and as she stood, half turned away from the bed, Kerry thought that she pressed the paper to her lips.

"Your father is on the porch, is he not?" she asked. "I want to talk with him." And she hurried out, to try to answer Dr. Marsh's letter right away. But Hall, as if he feared further intervention, had disappeared. The girl waited a long time, until Mrs. Althea Dale, in her black alpaca dress and brown turban, had come home from church. But Hall did not

return. She decided to come next day at his dinner hour. Dr. Marsh should have his answer as soon as possible; not the kind he had hinted for, but the kind he really wanted.

Meanwhile, Dr. Marsh, as he sped through the bright May sunshine, towards the Highlands, where one of his rich patients lived, said to himself:

"If there are white roses when I come again, I shall hope—" Then he chided himself. *Where on earth was that hospital coming from?*

Soon, his machine began to climb the mountain side. There, fresher and sweeter the wind blew than down in the main part of the city, crowded with furnaces, factories, railroad yards, and close-set houses. Fresher and sweeter still, it blew beyond the mountain. He must have his hospital

at whatever cost. He determined to send that very day, to Felicia, a box of those red roses which she loved so well. Then he remembered unpleasantly that the Wonder Lady liked red roses, too. He was sorry. Then he wondered if there would be white roses in Kerry's room next time.

The roses did not go to Felicia that day. In truth, I don't think they ever reached her.

CHAPTER XII

THE WONDER LADY PLEADS FOR KERRY'S CHANCE

WHEN the Wonder Lady came the next day, some time before the dinner hour, to her surprise, she found Hall crouched in a chair on the porch. Yet the mill was running. The warm air smelled of lint and of machinery, the low hum of which prevailed through the rattle of vehicles, the clang of electric cars in a near-by street, and the confused medley of noises from the city farther on.

Evidently, the unhappy man had been sitting there a long time. His appearance indicated that he had neither eaten nor

slept since the day before. With vacant eyes, unconscious of the glare, he stared where the mountain rim lay low beneath masses of snow white clouds.

From all this, the Wonder Lady was pleased to see that Dr. Marsh had made a deeper impression than he knew. The possibility of the operation had entered Hall's mind, and his present mood was not opposition, but indecision.

Her task appeared so easy, that at a glimpse of Mrs. Dale's inquisitive face peering furtively through the window, she allowed herself an amused smile. But it vanished quickly, and a deep sympathy took its place as she approached Hall.

He looked up with dull eyes at this vision of youth and grace.

"Good morning," she said in her kind voice. "How is Kerry to-day?"

He shuffled to his feet, offered his chair, and replied:

"I don't know, ma'am. He's been sayin' he's better; but now, yistiddy, he said he's jest puttin' on, makin' believe he wuz Daniel in the lion's den."

"He is better," she declared in her lovely, vivifying quality of voice. "He is better in mind; and any doctor will tell you that when the mind is better the body is. But that's not what you are worrying about. It's the operation. But you ought to think of all it means for Kerry." She smiled at him encouragingly, as she stood before him.

"How kin I tell what it means for him?" and the man fixed his wandering gaze upon her face. With his hands in his pockets he leaned weakly against the verandah post. "How kin I tell this

doctor ain't a-wantin' to experiment, like the rest? "

"He does not need to experiment," she cried warmly. "He did his experimenting for three years in American and European hospitals, and he has had eight years of practice since."

The man shuffled his feet, and for a moment did not speak. Within, Mrs. Dale's heavy steps were heard to soften, as her curiosity again brought her to the window.

"I've already hauled 'im from one doctor to another," Hall said at last.

"I know, I know," the Wonder Lady answered with pity. "Doctors are only human like us all. They cannot be infallible. They often work beyond their strength, and do not know it; and their skill falters, and they fail, and wonder

why. Others take some drug, or whiskey, to stretch their failing powers, and to steady their nerves; but these things cloud the vision, and they fail, too, and wonder why. Dr. Marsh is different. He conserves his strength; he relies alone on God. With God-given sight, he finds the true difficulty, among all confusing symtoms. God guides his hand, his instruments. Oh," she cried in a burst of enthusiasm, " you do not need to fear! You can trust Dr. Marsh every time."

" He said he didn't know," the man answered, in a baffling tone.

" He only wanted to prepare you, if anything should go wrong; but it won't. The chances are all for the boy."

" I don't know about that," and he shook his head. " There's somethin' wrong

about his heart. One of them other doctors said so, and this one as good as said so, too, only he said it wuz stronger, — and he wouldn't say he wuz sure. I do believe he's honest, and if he'd only said he wuz sure — "

"He cannot be God himself, with knowledge of life and death," the girl exclaimed.

Hall moved impatiently. Then his expression faltered; his gaze fixed itself appealingly on her kind face.

"That time," he said slowly, "jest because I wuz a bit keerless — jest sorter let things go — why, he fell, and wuz maimed for life; and now — if I say yes — he might die."

"That is with God," she pleaded. "You must trust it to Him."

He turned with a smothered oath:

"There ain't any help for me in that," he muttered.

"You wicked, wicked man!" the girl exclaimed. "It is because you had not God in your heart that the boy lies where he does."

Every vestige of color faded from his face. He dropped weakly into his chair, and turned his head away from her.

"I thought the girth would hold," was his broken defence, "but it snapped — and he fell —"

"Pitiful, pitiful!" she replied gently, "but why didn't you make sure the girth would hold?"

He made an impotent gesture.

"Ah," and she softened her voice yet more, "they who have God in the heart always make sure; they never 'sorter let things go;' they try to be as scrupulous

as He who counts the hairs on your head; — but listen, my poor man, the good God does not remember past failures when we do our duty now; and He wants you to forget."

"If I *could* forgit," he groaned, shaking his head. "If I only could."

"You can," the girl declared confidently. "You *will* if you do your duty now."

"My duty," the man roused himself; "I don't see it that way. He might die."

"Why," she expostulated, "the chances are all in his favor. The doctor says so. If there is a doubt, it is only such as we all live in daily. But if there were a doubt, what are two or three years of suffering and loneliness, against the hope of being strong and active, like other boys, of growing to a noble manhood — for he will

be noble, I am sure. I do not know a boy with a brighter mind, a kinder heart, or finer feelings."

The man was silent, but the great, pathetic brown eyes he turned on her, held a world of appreciation.

"Give the boy his chance," she pleaded. "He has a right to it. You owe it to him. If it was your fault that he was hurt, you can make up for it now by giving him this chance to get well."

Hall pulled at his shirt collar as though he were choking.

"He might die," said he, and it was evident no other word would come from him.

For a moment, she looked at him helplessly. How was she to strengthen his weak, irresolute will? give courage to a man who knew no God? Yet on this man's

decision, Kerry's chance depended. Then as she caught another glimpse of Mrs. Dale's odd face peeping around the window, she smiled, not with amusement, but with hope. Queer as Mrs. Dale was, through her, Kerry might be given his chance. Of the man's own class, his neighbor and friend, wishing to be something more — understanding him as she, herself, could not — Mrs. Dale might be able to help him to a favorable decision. If only she, too, were not obsessed by fear.

Mrs. Dale, on being interviewed, resented the suggestion that she was "afeared." Whatever she thought of the Wonder Lady, she saw no blemish in Dr. Marsh. She had already "spoke her mind to Mr. Hall for quittin' work and settin' round like one clean distracted, when he had such a chance offered him to

have Kerry cured, about whom she was as anxious as anybody, and she would again, without no outsiders' advice."

From the picture of Mrs. Dale speaking her mind to the troubled man, the Wonder Lady shrank; but remembering that the bitter necessity often demands the bitter means, she went away hopeful.

CHAPTER XIII

MRS. DALE RESOLVES THAT KERRY SHALL HAVE HIS CHANCE

NEVER yet satisfied as to the propriety of the name "Happy Day," and totally unaware that the girl had given her real name to Kerry — he having effectually concealed the card — Mrs. Dale's curiosity had grown apace. Her suspicions, also, had grown on what she interpreted as a laxity of church doctrine, and a too familiar use of the names of Deity. These were the considerations that compelled Mrs. Dale to put off the "speakin' of her mind to Mr. Hall" until she had made her second attempt to follow the Wonder Lady home.

Left alone, for a long time Hall continued to sit in his chair, as though rooted there by the intensity of the battle between his hopes and fears. At one moment, he could see his boy running and leaping in the street, going to school with his books slung over his back, or poring over them at night; the next, he would see a wasted form laid out stiff and white under a sheet — and he shuddered there in the warm close air, like a man with ague.

After a while, he grew calmer, his thought less troubled. He was persuading himself that, in spite of all they said, Kerry was better. Was his cheerfulness, his laughter, his good temper, just make-believe? Even now, he could hear the boy singing softly to himself. He *was* better, of course. Why not go in, and see?

He shambled to his feet, and crept softly into the room.

Kerry lay beating time to his song, on a little drum, with one shrunken hand. Curiously enough, it was the hand that riveted the father's attention.

"It's like a bird's claw," he groaned to himself, and turned away from the sight of it, to the window. Instantly the song and the tattoo ceased.

"Is your head worse, Daddy?" quavered the boy.

"It ain't no better," was the muffled reply. A headache had been his excuse to Kerry for being out of the mill.

"Don't you reckon it's workin' in the mill that makes your head ache?" Kerry asked.

"Maybe, maybe."

"Jes' the hummin' of it used to make mine ache," said Kerry.

"And it don't now?" Surely he was better. Hall turned round with an eager look, which faded as he again marked the pale, hollow cheeks and the dark circles about the eyes.

"I forget about it," Kerry said. "Daddy, when I get well, I'm goin' to work an' help you buy back our farm."

Hall, choking, turned back to the window. Presently, he returned to the verandah. The sky had become overcast with clouds, and in a little while it began to rain. It blew in upon him, and he took shelter in Mrs. Dale's room, as he remembered that he had seen her stealthily following the Wonder Lady when she went away.

When the rain was over, he went outside again; and there, at sunset, Mrs. Dale found him, his chair tilted against the wall,

his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. Under his furrowed brow, his bloodshot eyes gazed weakly into space. A pipe was in his mouth, but he was not smoking.

Mrs. Dale was tired and depressed — for she had failed in this attempt, also, to discover where the object of her suspicion lived — but the sight of Hall's impotent distress revived her energies. She tramped heavily up the steps, and with a determined look, stood directly in front of him.

Hall, pretending not to see her, shifted his gaze to the floor.

"I don't see why you keep goin' on that way," she complained. "I don't see why you don't make up your mind."

As Hall made no reply, she ventured several remarks of a similar kind, which,

also, were fruitless. Then she sat down on the doorstep, and eyed him in silent exasperation, while she considered a way to prod him into speech.

"I thought you warn't goin' to have anything more to do with doctors," she taunted, at last.

Hall turned a wavering glance upon her.

"I did say that," he acknowledged feebly. "But this doctor seems honest. I believe he knows what he says he knows, and that maybe he could make Kerry a well boy, if anybody could."

"Well, then, what on earth are you mopin' like this for?" was the shrill rejoinder. "Why don't you agree to what he says?"

"Kerry is little and weak," Hall answered. "I don't see how he could stand bein' cut into any more. There's some-

thin' the matter with his heart. Dr. Marsh didn't say there warn't. He jest said it wuz stronger. Kerry might die, and I'd feel like a murderer."

"That's foolish," declared Mrs. Dale, shortly. "Hain't he said there warn't no danger? I'll tell you what — you're selfish — that's what. You'd better stop thinkin' so much of *your* feelings and think of Kerry's some."

Hall brought his chair to the floor, and spat out doors. "Don't I think of him?" he asked with dull resentment. "He's part of my flesh and bone. He's not had a pain that I've not felt; and he won't have none that I won't feel, neither."

Mrs. Dale looked incredulous. "Well then," she snapped, "since you feel just like him, wouldn't you risk it, if it was yourself?"

"Well, no — I wouldn't," he replied slowly. "I'd want to live as long as I could. I'd not want anybody to risk my dyin' any sooner than I naturally would."

"Humph!" Mrs. Dale grunted. "That's the difference between you and me. If I was Kerry I'd think I was about dead already, and if anybody offered *me* the chance of bein' raised up, I'd jump at it. And I don't believe Kerry is so much of your flesh and blood but he may be different, too." Pushing against the floor with one hand, she lifted herself, and got up, her features taut with an abrupt resolution. "Will you leave it to him?" she demanded.

"Now look here," Hall straightened, and turned on her a certain concentration of spirit. "Don't you go sayin' anything to Kerry. I ain't a-goin' to have him skeered."

"HUMPH! SOMEBODY'S GOT TO DO SOME DECIDIN'."—*Page 157.*

"Humph!" was the sarcastic rejoinder. "You'll go crazy pretty soon. Somebody's got to do some decidin'."

"Kerry ain't the one to do it," he mumbled, as he settled weakly in his chair.

But Mrs. Dale had made up her mind. She stalked into Kerry's room.

CHAPTER XIV

DR. MARSH ARRIVES AT A DECISION IN HIS OWN PROBLEM

DR. MARSH'S mind, as he went his rounds next morning, bore a curious resemblance to one of a much humbler type. It is true that to Dr. Marsh the points he was trying to settle did not wear the serious aspects of life and death, but his mind kept shifting as helplessly from one to the other, as though they did. Should he marry Felicia Raeburn, and acquire the fortune which would enable him, in six or eight months, to see his hospital for children rising spacious and beautiful, among the trees in the valley? Or should he marry this dear, unknown

Winifred Beach, and acquire congenial companionship, sympathy in his aims, yet abandon all hope of his hospital for years to come? It seemed a mean thing to put his own immediate happiness above the happiness and comfort of the hundreds of crippled and invalid children whom that hospital would shelter. He simply could not do it. He must marry Felicia Raeburn — if she would have him. Then the memory of how nearly they had quarreled that night cheered him one instant — after all she *might not* accept him: and depressed him the next — if she didn't, he would not get the money for the hospital. But, good heavens! How could he ever bring himself to ask her?

The whole trouble lay in the fact that to Dr. Marsh, marriage without mutual love and esteem was a profanation. Though

he buried this instinct under tons of unselfish resolutions and beneficent aims, it had a way of rising to the surface, like some pervasive and delicate perfume, and of turning all his thoughts to Winifred Beach. It was she that he must marry — if she would have him. For of course, it was an audacious supposition that she would, based on deductions wholly psychic.

Slightly more material would be her answer to his hint for white roses. Ah, what would that answer be? White roses or red?

That was his question as he stopped in the dust and sunlight before Hall's door, and heard the Wonder Lady singing. To his annoyance, the voice, guardedly low and soft, made him think of Felicia. It was the law of contrasts, of course. Felicia's

singing was always light and careless, like the songs she sang.

How earnest was this soft, sweet voice! What courage it inspired; and how significant of the serious meaning of life were the words: —

> "'Dare to be a Daniel,
> Dare to stand alone;
> Dare to have a purpose true
> And dare to make it known!
>
> "'Many giants—'"

The singer broke off suddenly, and he knew that she had heard the puffing of his motor which the rattle of a passing cart had drowned before.

"A purpose true," he repeated as he went up the steps. "A purpose true." To have a purpose true, meant to be true to himself, of course. Why had he not been able to see it that way before?

"Ah, Winifred," he vowed, "the cats may have it," — meaning, of course, Mrs. Raeburn's money.

"But what would the roses be, white or red?" he wondered uneasily, as he knocked at the door.

Mrs. Dale admitted him. By her silence, and by her sharpened features, he knew that Miss Beach was in the room. He knew it, too, by the perfume of roses, which he smelled before he saw them. Alas, it was the musky perfume of red roses! Then he saw, with half a smile, on the bureau in the corner near the door, roses red *and* white — a fit match, truly, for his divided mind.

Meanwhile, this divided mind must be pushed aside for the physician's keen attention. He noticed first, with regret, that Hall was absent, which meant he was

still opposed to the operation. Then he marvelled at the brightness of his patient's little, worn face.

"Doctor," the boy cried, almost as soon as the door was opened, his voice clear as a silver bell, ringing high above the monotonous hum of the mill, "Doctor, we're goin' to have the operation."

"Good!" exclaimed Dr. Marsh, as he drew a chair to the bedside. "We will make a well boy of you."

"Daddy wuz afraid to decide, but I wuzn't," the child boasted.

"I wouldn't brag about that any more if I was you," Mrs. Dale said tartly, from her seat by the window.

Kerry flushed, and his lids fell.

"What is this?" Dr. Marsh asked, turning his bright blue eyes on Mrs. Dale, who flushed also, with irritation. It had

been the Wonder Lady's question, too, put with the same surprise.

"Mr. Hall couldn't decide, and somebody had to," she snapped.

"Of course," assented Dr. Marsh mildly. "So Kerry decided it. Well, he has a right to brag. He is a hero."

"I think it wuz his headache that made daddy afraid." The child's apologetic note was pathetic. "I think it's working in the mill that makes his head ache. Doctor, can't you give him some work when you get that hospital? He knows a whole lot about growin' things."

How wistfully his shadowed brown eyes gleamed, and how trustfully! Edgar dropped his own eyes that Kerry might not see their sudden gloom at this reminder of his hospital.

"I certainly will, if I can," was his kind

assurance; and he placed his stethoscope on the boy's chest.

Ah, that hospital! If there had been such a one at the time of Kerry's accident, what suffering, what imprisonment he might have been spared — not only he, but how many other little ones. Oh, for all the cats in the world to be shut in a pen that he might slaughter them!

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals need not be alarmed. Dr. Marsh had heard a sigh behind the headboard, when Kerry mentioned the hospital. Moreover, he had two cats of his own, mangy waifs, that he had rescued from the gutter.

Indeed, no man had a tenderer, kinder heart. When his examination was finished, and he sat a moment looking thoughtfully into Kerry's thin, sensi-

tive face, he felt that a man ought to make any sacrifice for the sake of these little ones; and it flashed over him, like a ray from the ether, that he could be true to himself only by forgetting himself — Winifred Beach would say that, if he could talk with her. And so, he must resign all thoughts of her.

Yet, though he had resigned all thoughts of Winifred Beach, his longing to meet her, face to face, just once, was so intense that before he went away, he wrote her another note on the leaves of his prescription book. In artfully worded phrases, he entreated her, for Kerry's sake, to be present at the operation.

"Here is another note which I must ask you to give to the Wonder Lady," he said to Kerry. "It is very important." Indeed it was, to judge by the flush in his

cheek, as he glanced at Mrs. Althea Dale. That person had dropped her knitting, and was staring in a way that was hateful.

"What makes you write," she burst out, "when *Miss Happy Day* is just behind the headboard?"

The slurring manner in which she pronounced the name, the animus in her ferret-like countenance, alarmed Edgar. Was the foolish creature planning some trouble for the Wonder Lady?

"Is that still worrying you?" he asked, impulsively. "I could have told you her real name long ago. I hope she will forgive me, — but it is Miss Winifred Beach."

"Did she tell you that herself?" demanded Althea.

"Does it matter who told me?" Dr. Marsh replied, a little severely.

To his surprise, she jumped up, and

darted through the front door. Then he saw her tightly drawn sandy hair glinting in the sun, as she ran, bareheaded, across the street. Afterwards, when he went away, he caught a glimpse of her odd little figure peering over a directory in the corner drug store. Suddenly recalling Mrs. Althea Dale's first interview with him in regard to "Miss Happy Day," he smiled.

"It ain't in the telephone book, nor d'rectory neither," he heard her inquisitive voice saying. Evidently, she was now in search of the name "Winifred Beach." Edgar's amusement increased. What harm could such a comical little creature do to a girl like Winifred Beach? To Winifred, the Wonderful?

This being so, he must put Winifred out of his mind, as he had resolved. He must,

and he would. *She* would say it was right; she would accept the sacrifice. "Good-by, Winifred," he said, with an ache in his heart. He had thought so much of her, she had become a part of him.

It may seem absurd to *you*, that a man should fall deeply in love with a girl whom he had never seen, but it was no laughing matter to Dr. Marsh. His automobile was threading its way slowly along a crowded thoroughfare, when a brother physician hailed him from a curb-stone: —

"Are you sick? You look like a 'stiff.'"

"No, it is the heat," Edgar said curtly, with a grim smile. Then he looked far up the street, where it ran, through a gap in the mountain, straight on to the valley of his dream. Through this gap he ex-

pected ambulances to speed, within five or ten minutes, from the heart of the city to his hospital — and as he looked, he tried to strengthen his heart.

CHAPTER XV

WILL THE WONDER LADY COME?

WHEN the Wonder Lady read Edgar's note asking her to be present at the operation, it was *her* turn to be undecided. She stood there, looking first at Kerry, then at the note; her lovely face now flushing red as the roses in her hat, now fading white as her muslin dress. Before she could recover, Kerry's father came in through the kitchen door, dragging his feet in a manner unlike the long high step which was his own. This strange manner, his shrunken face, and the dull look in his great brown eyes, made the girl thrust her note, forgotten, into her

belt. She put out a gracious hand, and in a warm, kind voice she said: —

"I hope your headache is gone."

"My headache?" he questioned, then looked from her to Kerry, and ran his knotted fingers across his forehead. "It is a little better, ma'am," he said at last; then moved unsteadily to a chair near the bed, sat down, and gazed at Kerry's happy face in a sort of stupefied wonder.

The girl looked at the man with pity.

"I am glad," she said, a little timidly at a distress she could not gauge, "that you have consented — that you are willing for Dr. Marsh to operate."

Hall did not reply, but his silence expressed dissent, and something like resentment.

"When is it goin' to be?" he inquired after a moment, in a compressed tone, as

though the question were forced from him.

"Why, that is left to you," she replied, and took Edgar's note from her belt and looked at it. "Dr. Marsh says at four o'clock, a week from to-day, if that will suit you."

"If that will suit me," Hall repeated bitterly. "Why say that when you have all taken it out of my hands?"

At this ungrateful and unjust complaint, the girl flushed.

"It has never been in your hands at all," she asserted, her eyes flashing, "but in the hands of God."

"Well!" exclaimed the man, turning on her a dull, half-frightened gaze, "if the boy lives I'll believe in your God; if he don't, I will curse Him." He rose abruptly and started from the room.

"The boy will live," cried the Wonder Lady so passionately that he stopped, and faced her with an eager, almost hopeful air; "he will live," she repeated, "not for your wicked vow, but because of the faith that the rest of us have in the living God; he will live, because the Spirit of God is in the child himself."

It seems that such courage, such faith, would have inspired a clod. Kerry gazed at her with adoring, awe-struck eyes; but his father turned away, shaking his head. He was one of those pitiful ones who lack the will to believe. At the door, he turned again.

"You'll be there?" he asked, as if he believed she would, but sought double assurance.

Her cheeks turned red again. The question recalled the necessity of decision in

regard to meeting Dr. Marsh. She began to read his note for the third time, when a movement at the door, and an indignant cry from the boy, caused her to look up.

Behind Mrs. Althea Dale, who came pushing in, with a set, determined look on her insignificant features, there loomed up a big, fat, red-faced policeman. This was Mr. Michael Hagarty, the officer of the beat, whom Mrs. Dale, soon after Dr. Marsh had seen her searching the directory, had found on the corner outside. Idly swinging his club, he stood gazing at a gaudy theatrical poster on the board fence which enclosed the druggist's garden. His disengaged air, his good-humored countenance, gave rise to a sudden impulse in Mrs. Dale, who marched up to him and made a charge against the Wonder Lady.

The doubts which led to this impulse were, as we know, of long standing; but it was not easy to convince Mr. Hagarty that a suspicious character visited Kerry every day. He knew a young lady who was working secretly among the poor, but he could not conceive of her as a suspicious character.

"Faith, an' it's me who would have seen her," he remonstrated. "I walks this beat pretty regular. Maybe ye kin tell me which way she comes?"

"Sometimes she comes this way, and then that, and that." Althea pointed, with a freckled, bony finger, up and down the street; then down the cross street, which ran like a pale yellow ribbon across the city, and on up the mountain side.

"It's sure strange that I haven't seen

her," replied Mr. Hagarty, his stolid expression unchanged. "What does she look like?"

"She looks like that." Mrs. Dale pointed to a creature in gauze skirts, with flaming cheeks and immense black eyes, which leered at them from the poster. Mrs. Althea was perfectly conscientious in this. To her narrow mind, the Wonder Lady really had the bold, audacious look of the girl in the poster, at which, to her disgust, Mr. Hagarty glanced admiringly.

"I likes show girls meself," said he, "there ain't no harm in them. Ye'll have to bring something worse than that against her."

"She's goin' round under a false name," Althea declared eagerly. "She told the boy her name was 'Happy Day' and that ain't no name at all. It's the name of a

hymn. And she told the doctor her name was 'Winfred Beach,' and that, nor Happy Day neither, ain't in the telephone book, nor in the d'rectory neither."

At this, Mr. Hagarty's white teeth shone in a broad grin. "Oh come off," he said in good-humored condescension. "Is your name in the telephone book?"

"No, but it's in the d'rectory," snapped Mrs. Dale.

"Mine ain't," he said laconically, "because I didn't live here when it was got up. But it ain't natural for a woman to have two names. Has she talked that way about where she lives?"

"She ain't said nothin' about that," Althea declared. "She don't aim to let anybody know where she lives. I tried to follow her home twicet. The first time, she went in and out around four blocks, then

jumped into an automobile, and was whizzed off like a rocket. The next time, she got on a street-car, and I got on behind. Instead of goin' home, she went down town, and stayed the whole evenin' in the dry goods stores, havin' the clerks pull down bales of goods for her, and if she bought anything I couldn't tell it. She didn't want anything. She knew I was after her."

"Maybe she did," replied Mr. Hagarty with another grin at the thought of this odd little figure in pursuit of a fine lady in her shopping.

"It is your business to look into it, and not laugh," exclaimed Mrs. Dale angrily.

This was true.

"What is it ye suspect?" he asked, with mock severity.

Althea hesitated a moment. She hardly

knew what she did suspect. Then she bridled.

"She's done some meanness somewhere, and she's pretendin' to do good to cover it up. There ain't no right-minded woman goin' to sneak around this way, all veiled up all the time; and she jumps at every sound; and if anybody does knock on the door, she sneaks out at the kitchen door, or she slides behind the bed-head. Come on now and you'll see."

The policeman's impassivity began to yield.

"Thim don't seem proper actions for a young lady," he commented slowly. "It won't do any harm to look at her."

"Come on," Althea urged. "She's in there now." She ran ahead, much elated. 'Now this mealy-mouthed, sneakin' girl would be confounded; she would own up;

she would tell her real name, and where she lived.' Bristling with excitement, Althea pushed in, past the confused Hall, and careless of Kerry's indignant looks. Mr. Hagarty, however, stopped on the door-sill, snatched off his helmet, and stood there, dumb with embarrassment.

To the astonishment of all, to the delight of two at least — the policeman and Kerry — the Wonder Lady began to laugh.

"Good morning, Mr. Hagarty," she said. "How is little Mike?"

"Faith, mem, his leg is healed entirely," replied Mr. Hagarty, wiping his brow with a purple bandanna; "sure, mem, an' thanks to you, he's as well as his father, but not such a fool, I hope." And he backed out.

Mrs. Dale, unsatisfied, followed him to

the porch. At her, he cast a look of withering contempt.

"Go back to the tall grass," he said disgustedly, and stalked off.

"What is her name?" cried Althea, unabashed, from the top step.

"Would ye insult the Holy Virgin by askin' her name?" he shouted over his shoulder.

Mrs. Dale turned round to find the Wonder Lady waiting, with a reproachful look on her beautiful, kind face.

"Why do you dislike me so?" she asked.

Althea's sallow skin turned a dull red. She blinked a little.

"I don't know as I dislike you, ma'am," she returned sourly, "but I don't understand the way you act; givin' one name one time; and one another; and your

"He's as well as his father, but not such a fool, I hope."
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hidin' every time you hear the doctor and — "

The girl interrupted her, speaking in a constrained voice: —

"It didn't occur to me that you could think anything wrong of me for trying to remain unknown. I know it looks foolish, my going to such extremes — but you see — I am young; and — Dr. Marsh — well, he is young too — and — he might — men are so egotistical — " here she began to laugh once more, — "he *might* think me trying to throw myself in his way."

"Humph!" This was an absurd explanation. Mrs. Dale looked more sour than before. "You'll have to meet him now," she said. "You'll be at the operation."

The girl's hand went to the note in

her belt again, but she did not take it out.

"No," she answered firmly. "There will be trained nurses, and other physicians besides Dr. Marsh. I should only be in the way."

"Kerry will want you," Althea urged slyly. "After all you've made of him, he'll not be able to do without you."

"Dr. Marsh will be sufficient for him," replied the Wonder Lady, hurriedly. "I've other plans, other engagements."

As if to avoid further discussion, she went back into the room.

"Humph," commented Althea, "Engagements! Susciety, I reckon, since she ain't no suspicious character. If she's got any of the feelin' she's been pretendin' to have, she'll come."

With a somewhat similar argument, Dr. Marsh persuaded himself that the Wonder Lady could not stay away when Kerry was operated on.

"Her kind heart will not let her," he said.

CHAPTER XVI

KERRY NEEDS THE WONDER LADY

THE momentous hour had arrived. In a white room next to Dr. Marsh's operating-room (after all, he had been unable to secure the better appointed one of Roland's, as he had hoped), Kerry lay waiting to be examined before the administration of an anesthetic. Two white-robed nurses were in attendance, and two physicians besides Dr. Marsh.

In the corridor outside, the boy's father was pacing up and down, his eyes fixed and vacant, like a sleep-walker's. Mrs. Althea Dale, too, sat in a chair near the front door of the corridor, with cotton in

her ears, lest she should hear Kerry scream. But the Wonder Lady had not come.

Dr. Marsh hoped that she would, up to the last. And now, as in his sterile linen gown and cap, and gauze mouth-cloth, he stood by Kerry, her absence was more than a selfish regret. It had become the surgeon's anxiety for his patient. The child was nervous and excited, startled at every sound, at every movement. Worse, he was irritable and cross, a phase new in Edgar's experience with him. In truth, the bath at strange hands, the scrubbings of his sensitive back first with hot water and soap, then with alcohol, then with a two-thousandth corrosive sublimate solution, had overtaxed the child's endurance. All this was not half. The Wonder Lady's card, which he had cunningly hidden so long, and which he had

brought crumpled in one hand to the hospital, had been taken from him by the nurse who gave the bath. To his great indignation, she had said the precious thing was covered with *germs*, and in spite of his entreaties, had refused to let him have it again. He did not cry, but the effort which had repressed his tears had not improved his temper. He lay with flushed cheeks and drooping lip corners; and the half fearful, half sullen glance of his great brown eyes wandered from one to another of the faces about him, and found no rest.

This deepened Edgar's anxiety. The nurses had not told him of the trouble about the card; and he did not know how keen, how abstracted, his own look had grown over the long, excessively deliberate examination of Kerry's heart by Dr.

Norwell. How he wished for the Wonder Lady's calming influence, as he watched Kerry shrink from the deft fingers of the strange doctor, when they went tapping, tapping on the thin chest walls.

This Dr. Norwell was an eminent specialist whom Edgar had called at his own expense, in order to be assured that the thing he had sometimes fancied was but a fancy, a trick of the auditory nerve, or a flaw in his own instrument. Another man would have thought such precaution excessive, that a lesser man than Dr. Norwell would answer; but not Dr. Marsh.

He knew he had not been too cautious, as the specialist applied his stethoscope over the heart's apex and listened, first with one ear and then the other; then moved his instrument over the center, and listened in the same manner; then over the base,

where he kept it longest. Did Norwell hear the faint, illusive murmur which had made *him* doubtful of the aortic valve? Edgar could not tell. The specialist moved the stethoscope back to the apex, and listened there a long time also. Did he hear a diastolic murmur there, which added to the doubt? Again Edgar could not tell. Norwell's face was non-committal.

Then he bade Kerry hold his breath, so that the heart's sounds should not be mixed with lung sounds, and listened again as carefully as before. Still, his face said nothing. He lifted his iron-gray head, then the instrument, and put it aside.

"Talk to him, divert him, if you can," he muttered to Edgar, and went to the window, and stood, as if looking out on the sunlit street.

Presently he came back, and as slowly,

as carefully as before, went over the examination in every detail.

The noises from the street — the rattle of cars, the clatter of motors, the cries of hawkers, the subdued, irregular hum of other voices — pressed in, but you could have heard a pin drop in the room. Indeed, they did hear each other's breathing.

At last the suspense was over. Dr. Norwell's face cleared. He stood up, and looked at Edgar.

"It is no more than if a gliding shadow made sound," he said. "I think you may go on."

The tone, more than the words, proved to Edgar that the thing he feared, the aortic insufficiency, was true. In a healthy child it would not have mattered; but here the processes of life were too delicately hung to risk the dangers of ether. That

Norwell did not think so, was evident. There was a challenge of opinions as their glances met — a friendly challenge, but it startled Kerry, who had been watching them intently.

His eyes began to glow, testifying that the Wonder Lady's spell had resumed its sway.

"Can't you do it?" he quavered bravely, so anxiously, that every heart in the room yearned over him.

"Yes, we can," Edgar replied. "But we can't put you to sleep. You will have to know about it. But you must be a Daniel. You must be patient and brave."

"I will," Kerry promised, with no quaver in his voice now. "It won't be worse than the pains I have at night sometimes, an' I keep still then. Daddy will tell you so. He thinks I'm better; but

they come jes' like they used to, sharp like a knife."

"I knew you were a hero," returned Dr. Marsh. "But we will not hurt you, if you keep still." Then he spoke to the nurses:

"Make him ready."

One of the women picked the child up in her arms, and bore him into the operating-room.

It was not such a room as Edgar dreamed of for that greatly desired hospital — a room all windows on three sides, and with a skylight above. Here, there were cross lights. And there were other defects: for instance, a wooden floor and tables. But all had been thrice sterilized; and if any germs still lurked in seams and crevices, it was not in human power to remove them. Other details preparatory to the operation had been completed. On one

table, the instruments glittered in orderly array. Close by, on another, were trays of iodoform gauze, of bandages, and sutures. The operating table, near which these smaller tables were ranged, was covered with a snow white sheet, and had on it a pillow to be used for securing the proper position.

The nurse laid Kerry on the table, and sterilized his back again. Then they turned him on his side — with a strange lack of thought, facing the instrument tables — drew up his knees, and reported to the doctors that the patient was ready.

Thus far, the child had been perfectly quiet, though each time they had moved him, pain ran riot through his frail body. He had clenched his teeth, thought of the Wonder Lady, and whispered to himself, "I'm a Daniel, I'm a Daniel."

Dr. Marsh, when he came in, felt encouraged, elated. Norwell had been saying that he was undertaking a rash business. Local anesthesia was considered unsuitable for children, or for other people deficient in self-control. It had been used on children by no surgeon in this country, and by only one abroad. Not even Deetz, Norwell had averred, would risk it with a child like this, whose nerves were as fragile as paper twine. But the nervousness shown under Norwell's examination, and which had influenced his opinion, had entirely passed; and the patient, determined look on the little face, represented the remarkable self-control which Kerry really possessed. Edgar, who knew the source of this control, did not doubt that it would be sufficient.

In spite of the Wonder Lady's training,

however, just as the doctors and nurses took their places on either side the table, preparatory to injecting the stovaine solution which should render the operation painless, Kerry abruptly fell into convulsive crying.

It seemed impossible to pacify him, and Edgar's heart sank. The whole place was in uproar and confusion. Hall was pounding on the door to the corridor, demanding entrance. Althea's shrill voice rose, bidding him to be still. Close to Edgar's ear, Dr. Norwell was saying in low, incisive tones:

" Give ether, if you operate at all."

Edgar shook his head. He felt that he could not take life and death into his hands without the father's consent.

Suddenly the child's convulsive cries became articulate.

"Send for the Wonder Lady," he sobbed. "Send for the Wonder Lady."

"Yes, my boy, yes;" Edgar managed to speak calmly, though his heart leaped painfully at thought of the Wonder Lady's coming. "We will send at once, if you will tell us where she lives."

"It is on the card," Kerry sobbed, "the card they took — took —" and he burst out crying afresh.

"There, there, never mind. We will get it. Where is the card?" Dr. Marsh asked a little sharply of the nurses.

"It is on the table in the other room," replied one.

"I will get it," said Edgar, and started to the door.

"Doctor!" Kerry wailed, "don't — don't look at it! She told me not to tell!"

Nobody laughed; least of all Edgar,

who was thinking just then that antiseptic zeal could sometimes be carried too far. He perceived, now, why Kerry's courage had failed. The card was a fetish to him.

He smiled, when, after a moment, he recognized a tiny, crumpled roll as the thing he sought. It was very carefully rolled up with the name inside, and looked as if, sometime, it had been in Kerry's mouth.

It was like Dr. Marsh to keep faith, even in such whimsical affairs as this. He picked up the card without unrolling it, and went into the corridor.

Hall was no longer besieging the door of the operating-room, but he stood there, or rather leaned against the framing, as though ready to collapse. Edgar called him by name.

"Kerry is all right," he said, assuringly. "He was only frightened. He wants the Wonder Lady, and if she will come, we can have the operation. Here is her card. Get into my car, which is waiting, and tell my chauffeur to drive you there as swiftly as the law allows."

Hall's face brightened. He snatched the card, exhibiting no surprise at its form, and ran down the corridor. As he approached the door, Althea, who had never left her seat there, demanded:

"Where are you goin'?"

"For the Wonder Lady," he said, in passing.

"How will you find her?" she cried.

"I've her address on her card," he returned over his shoulder, as he bounded into the car.

"Lem me see it," she gasped, and gave

one astonishing leap to the bottom of the high steps. But the car was off, clattering far down the street.

She stood a moment in the yellow sunlight, and glared at the vanishing car. When she turned, there was Dr. Marsh smiling on her from the door, to which he had come in order to see that Hall got off without hindrance. He was smiling at the grotesque figure which Althea had presented in her leap from the steps, but she did not know this.

"What was the name on that card?" she demanded breathlessly.

"My good woman, I did not look."

Althea stared at him a moment, speechless at such negligence. Then she burst out: —

"She told me one name and you another, and nary one is in the telephone

book, nor in the d'rectory neither, and I'll bet nary one is on that card."

"I don't care," he responded, "so she comes."

"She'll not come," Althea asserted. "She told me she was goin' to a susciety of some sort."

Not greatly impressed, Edgar turned away, still smiling. The comic interlude had eased the tension of his mind.

He went back into the room in which he had found the card. Dr. Norwell was there. No comic interlude had eased *his* mind. He was both impatient and annoyed.

"I should give the ether," he declared abruptly. "What is the use of dilly-dallying when the risk is scarcely recognizable?"

"The Wonder Lady will not be long in

coming, I am sure," replied Edgar calmly. "The boy is in no condition for ether. The prone position makes him liable to suffocation."

"Who is this Wonder Lady?" the other demanded.

Edgar explained, in carefully modulated tones, just how little he knew of who she was, and how much of what she did.

"H'm — h'm. I've heard of her," was the grudging reply. "But do you think that in such a case as this, she will exercise proper self-control?"

"We can tell when we see her. If you are hurried, we can manage without you." Edgar spoke coldly. He was wearied of Norwell's opposition.

"I will wait awhile," his friend replied, with more grace. He sat down and began to question Edgar about the operation in

terms that we should not understand. It was one requiring the utmost delicacy of skill. Its success meant fame. Dr. Norwell's carefully worded talk was intended to convey this insinuation, but it fell short of its mark.

Edgar was too simple minded, too much concerned over suffering humanity, ever to have thought of fame, though fame meant affluence, and affluence meant his hospital independent of Mrs. Raeburn and of Felicia. It meant Winifred Beach, with whom the undercurrent of his thought was engaged through all Norwell's tiresome twaddle.

Would she come? Ah, if she should not, how bad that would be for Kerry! The operation, possibly, would have to be put off. Norwell, possibly, would not come next time. Yes, decidedly, it would be bad

for Kerry. Of course he was not thinking of himself. It was nothing to him that he was about to meet Winifred Beach face to face. Not for him was she, with her graciousness, her uplifting, strengthening, calming influence. For him, Felicia Raeburn, with her inconsequent laughter, her frivolous songs, her "Helpers of Joy," and all!

In spite of this grave resolution, when the announcement came, fifteen minutes later, that the Wonder Lady was in the hospital waiting-room, he jumped to his feet, and his face flushed a deep red.

"I will see if she is fit," he said shakily, as he hurried from the room.

His friend looked after him with alarm. "Humph!" he muttered. "I must persuade him to let me examine his heart — must have some valvular insufficiency."

Dr. Norwell could not imagine that a serious-minded fellow like Edgar Marsh, would fall in love with a girl he had never seen.

CHAPTER XVII

HIS LADY OF SECRET BENEVOLENCES

HOW would she look? What would she say first? Would she be more than half inclined to run, even now? This thought quickened his step, but at the open door of the waiting-room he halted, speechless, his blue eyes opened wide.

It was Felicia Raeburn who stood there, in her trailing afternoon gown of soft gray. At his first glance, her eyes were downcast, and on her face, to him so "faultily faultless," there was a sober, steadfast look which surprised him, and which might well have belonged to the "devout and

pensive nun" of his fancy. The next instant, she looked up and saw him: and her still, dark eyes flashed into brilliance; her red lips seemed about to part in a ripple of laughter. He thought her brimming with suppressed excitement; and that she was either on her way to the "Helpers of Joy," or had just come from that club of frivolity. Yet on the table close by, lay her plumed hat and long white gloves. She had come to stay! This was the incomprehensible. He continued to stare, and was dumb.

The glow vanished from the girl's face, and she stiffened.

"There was no time to change," she apologized, as though he were staring only at her inappropriate costume. "I thought I ought to come at once. Where is Kerry?"

"Felicia!" he protested, in a tone half imploring, half incredulous.

"Yes, Felicia," she repeated with convincing calmness; "but I wouldn't have come if Kerry had not sent for me. Where is he?"

He stared at her a moment longer, her words, "I would not have come if Kerry had not sent for me," etching themselves on his mind; then the blood rushed to his cheeks.

"This way, if you please," he said quietly. There was no doubt that *this* Wonder Lady would be equal to the emergency.

And was she not? The moment Kerry's eyes fell on her, the weak, nervous expression left his face. She sat down at his head; and under the spell of her bright dark eyes, of her clear, spirited voice, he made

no sign when the needle bearing the anesthetic was pressed in; nor afterwards seemed to hear the voices of the physicians at his back, nor the faint click of instruments cutting through his flesh and bone.

Although there was no more trouble with Kerry, Dr. Marsh felt that his own had just begun.

All through the operation he suffered a sense of two distinct personalities: one, cool of intellect, clear of vision, steady of hand, separated delicate muscles, tied up blood-vessels, sawed through tender bones, chiselled away the encroaching growth of callus, and step by step, closed up the wound; the other was painfully conscious of the face which hitherto he had seen only in his dreams — Felicia's beauty irradiated with the beauty of the Wonder

Lady's character — and more beautiful, more greatly to be desired than ever he had dreamed.

Indeed, nothing could have been lovelier than this exquisitely dressed girl, in her complete forgetfulness of self, and of the embarrassing relations which Mrs. Raeburn's will had caused between her and Dr. Marsh. The two strange physicians and the nurses glanced at her more than once. They knew about the will. They wondered at her composure, in the presence of the man who had refused to marry her, as it was said. They wondered more at Dr. Marsh's refusal; and some of them thought they saw through the Lady's strange method of charity. But they did not; for this method had been practised before she knew Dr. Marsh, though, of course, not to such extremes.

She was talking to Kerry of the three Hebrew boys who came out alive from the fiery furnace, and explaining that the Power which sustained them, would sustain him now and always. The old tale, which fell from her lips very simply, very beautifully, was not appreciated by Dr. Marsh. To him, a fiery furnace seemed nothing to his shame at having misjudged her; at having assumed her light and happy heart to be incompatible with nobility and true religion. Pharisee that he had been! It was not strange that she had withheld her confidence. "I would not have come if Kerry had not sent for me." So to the end, she would have kept him ignorant that she was the lady of secret benevolences whom he had learned to love so well. No doubt she despised utterly so poor a thing as he, incapable of

appreciating her, yet wishing to marry her for money.

These reflections, or more accurately, feelings of the lover personality, did not affect the nerve of the surgeon, but they did his manner. His face was severe and keen; his tones, sharp and quick. The nurses, as with bated breath they passed him retractors, needles, sutures, and dressings, regarded him with curiosity. His friends, the two physicians, watched him anxiously, fearing that his over-strung nerves might cause his hand to slip, or his eye to fail. All had been with him at other operations, and knew this manner was unnatural. Had they not known about the Raeburn will, and seen besides, that the operation was going well, they surely would have thought it going wrong.

That was what Felicia thought. She

was pale; the hand trembled which lightly caressed the child's brow; and there was a veiled fear in her one or two sudden scrutinies of Dr. Marsh's face.

And yet, her low tones continued to swell with hope and courage; her soft laugh, to express her delight in love and holiness. With that second personality weighing upon his spirits like an incubus, Edgar knew this manner, which his prejudice had hitherto interpreted as flippant, to be the triumph of her brave soul over doubt, fear, or embarrassment. Ah, those infamous dinners! Those cats and their domineering mistress! Why had Felicia elected to endure it all? *Why?* He would find out before he was many hours older.

His gloom lifted, his spirits bounded upward just in time. The last dressing

had been applied to the wound. The difficult operation was finished, and *of course* he could unbend now!

"Ask the Wonder Lady if she will go fishing with us next spring," he said to Kerry in a playful, but warm tone, and with a smile at Felicia.

"Why, is it all done, Doctor?" the boy cried. Felicia merely gave one quick, inscrutable look upward, then gazed at the floor.

"All done," returned Edgar. "And he has stood it like a man," he continued, smiling at Felicia's lowered eyelids. "I never had a patient come through an operation in better shape, and we are very grateful to you."

Felicia bowed, but seemed to think the floor more interesting than his beaming countenance.

"I will relieve your father's anxiety," she murmured to Kerry. Then she left the room so much more quickly than the situation demanded that all Edgar's gloom descended on him again. She could have spoken one word; given one look of appreciation!

He would have understood if he had seen Felicia as she was seen, a few minutes later, by Mrs. Dale.

This person had learned the Wonder Lady's real name at last; and during the operation, had been almost as anxious to make friends with the "high-toned" Miss Raeburn as for Kerry to come safely through. When the door of the operating-room opened, and Miss Raeburn came out, Althea sprang up and darted forward.

Miss Raeburn, however, appeared to be in haste. She paused a second only beside

Kerry's father, to whom she spoke briefly, then hurried on into the waiting-room.

"Did you hear that, Althea?" the man cried, and turned his shining face to her who had so often watched and tended his invalid boy. "Kerry is alive, and is going to get well!"

Althea had no time to sympathize with him now. It is doubtful if the proposal of marriage for which she hoped, would have stopped her.

"Who thought he warn't?" was her response, as she ran close after the girl who had so troubled her curiosity. Felicia stood with her back to the door, and was putting on her hat. She did not turn, so Mrs. Dale went round in front of her.

Behold! the tears were trickling down her cheeks.

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Dale, sur-

prised out of her prepared speech, "for once you ain't a-gigglin'."

"But I'm just as happy, just as happy," the girl said; and suddenly she was laughing in her old way. Grief, herself, would have laughed at Mrs. Dale.

She, of course, did not laugh. Her comically severe face, however, was tempered with such a strange and anxious humility, that Felicia soon stopped.

"What is it?" she asked very kindly, and Mrs. Dale blurted out: —

"Oh, miss, I don't know what to say. I treated you worse than a heathern."

"That is all right," Felicia said with a sweet graciousness. She drew on a glove. "You didn't know." The other glove was on, and she started to go.

"It was your queer name," exclaimed Althea. Resolved to satisfy her curiosity

at all costs, she placed herself between Felicia and the door. "'Happy Day.' I never heerd of anybody havin' such a name. It's the name of a hymn." Mrs. Althea Dale was herself again, bristling with what she supposed to be her superior piety.

Felicia paused, smiling at the odd little figure, but not in a way to offend.

"'Day' was my mother's name," she explained, in a softened voice. "I was her only child, and she called me Happy. That is what Felicia means, you know, so I have a right to the name Happy Day. Good-by." She passed around Mrs. Dale and hurried out.

"Humph!" grunted Mrs. Dale, and she eyed askance Dr. Marsh, who appeared in the hall a moment later. After the operation, and he had seen his patient

safe in bed, he had hurriedly put off his surgeon's uniform, and come out, not thinking that Felicia possibly could run off without a word. He was just in time to watch her whiz away in his automobile.

He stood a moment gazing ruefully at the swiftly moving car. He saw no reason for her to run now; nor, indeed, any reason why she should ever have run from him, unless it were she could not bear the sight of him.

He turned to meet a disagreeable stare from Mrs. Dale.

"I reckon you're the cause she's been behavin' like that," she ventured, as a salve for her curiosity.

Edgar glanced at her coldly. For an instant, he forgot her very worthy care of his little patient and hated her completely. It was enough to know that

Felicia could not bear the sight of him, without this creature to rub it in. Leaving the little woman aghast by his silence, he went into his office to await the return of his automobile.

He sat down, by chance, facing a window which looked out, across a vacant lot, at the green, undulating rim of the mountain which lay between the grimy, sordid town and the sweet valley of his dream. The mountain was not very high — in a real mountain country, perhaps it would not be called a mountain — but to Edgar, at this moment, it loomed higher than the Himalayas. He had lost the girl who had charmed his imagination and his soul, and the fortune, too, with which he had hoped to build his hospital.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MEANING OF A ROSE

AS he sat there, absorbed in his unhappy reflections, his automobile rolled up in front of the steps. He rose to get his hat, when he saw his chauffeur coming in with a bunch of roses. Edgar stood gazing, a sudden warmth flashing over him. Once he had hinted for white roses, and she had brought them mixed, as though, it seemed to him now, in mockery of his divided mind. These were all white. The man carried also a small tin horn of the Christmas sort, and, for convenience, possibly, he had thrust the stems of the roses into its throat. To Edgar, for a brief second, it appeared a cornucopia

of good-will, of peace, and love. Then he laughed at his folly. Kerry was, of course, the favored one, — the horn for the boy part of him, the roses to develop his spiritual nature.

The horn and roses, and a note, also for Kerry, were brought to Edgar in a few moments by one of the attendants, who asked if she must give them to the patient. Edgar took them in himself.

On the little white cot, Kerry lay quiet and free from pain; for the lower part of his back and his legs were still under the influence of the anesthetic. He looked so well that if Edgar had not been the operating surgeon himself, he would have scarcely believed the boy had been operated on half an hour before. It was not to his sharpened features, or hollow eyes, that this look of well being was due, but

to the happiness that illumined them. Through the window at the foot of his cot, he, too, could see the mountain rim. It was gilded now by the setting sun, and wandered like a river of greenish gold between the gray, shadowy roof tops and the blue sky.

There Kerry was gazing, absorbed in some childish reverie. He seemed not to hear the doctor enter and come to his bedside; or possibly, he thought it was the nurse who had left him not long before.

"What are you dreaming about, my boy?" Edgar inquired gently.

Kerry was so deep in his dream that he looked up into the doctor's kind blue eyes without ever seeing the horn, or smelling the roses.

"I wuz thinkin' of my father's farm," he piped thinly, "an' how I'm goin' to

work, an' help him buy it back when I get well."

"That is a good dream," said Edgar.

"I wuz thinkin', too, of your hospital; you said you would give my father work when you got it."

"That dream is good also, and it shall come true if I ever get the hospital. The chances look slim now, my boy. But see what I have for you. Some presents from the Wonder Lady." He held them up. Kerry's large brown eyes grew larger and rounder.

"Oh, doctor! Kin I blow that horn in this room?"

"In a day or two, perhaps," said Edgar with a smile. "Meanwhile it shall lie on this table where you can see it. And the roses, I will put in this glass, and set over here in the window, where you can see them too."

"Now," he continued, as he returned to the cot, "she sent you a note also. You are a lucky boy." He took the note from his vest pocket, and held it up gaily. It was a quaint little missive, with one corner bent over like a dog's ear. He began to unfold it, then hesitated:

"Why, what is the matter?" Kerry's look had become one of distress.

"She might — she might not like you to read it," he stammered.

"I think she'll excuse us this time," Edgar assured him, but his own face clouded slightly. "We'll have to risk it. It might be too much effort for you, just now." Then he read: —

"DEAR KERRY: — I send you a little horn to blow — if Dr. Marsh says you may — when the nurse is out, and you

want anything. The roses are to make your room pretty and smell sweet. You may give Dr. Marsh some of them — you remember, he said he liked white roses."

"You kin have 'em all," Kerry said, in an excess of love and gratitude for the doctor, not because he did not like flowers.

"Thank you, one will do," returned Edgar. He went over, and selected a half opened bud, and put it in his buttonhole, with fingers that trembled. The last lines of this little note, more than anything else, had identified Felicia with the devout, demure, whimsical, and altogether delightful Winifred Beach of his fancy. So she remembered, if she did bring them red and white that time! Did it mean anything? — or nothing? On a sudden im-

pulse he drew a chair up to the cot and sat down.

"Do you know the Wonder Lady's real name?" he asked.

"No, I never looked at the card," Kerry said proudly. "I didn't keer what her name wuz."

"She is Miss Raeburn," said Edgar. "Why, what is wrong?" he questioned. The child's eyes were big and round again. His lips drooped. Surely it could not be that his Wonder Lady had told a lie!

"She said she didn't know Miss Raeburn; she told Mrs. Dale so," he quavered.

"You have a troublesome little memory," Edgar laughed. "She told the truth. She couldn't possibly know herself, — she's too wonderfully made."

Kerry could understand that. His look brightened.

"I reckon that's so," he said. "But, Doctor, then what made her run every time you come?"

"That is what I should like to know," said Edgar, from the depths of his soul.

"Maybe," ventured the child slowly, "maybe she thinks you don't like her."

"I think it is because she doesn't like me," Edgar replied.

"I think she does," answered the boy, his face full of love for the doctor. "I think she would like to help you build that hospital."

"Oh no, she might want to build it herself," Edgar answered, "but not to help me."

"She mos' said so," Kerry declared eagerly. "When she come out from back of the bed, that time you told me and Mrs. Dale about your hospital, I said

I wished I could help, and she said — she said — "

Just then the nurse who had delivered the horn and roses to Dr. Marsh, opened the door; then paused, with surprise on her homely, but kind face.

Edgar turned, and glanced at her somewhat coldly.

"I will call you when I leave," he said, in a measured voice.

The nurse looked more surprised, and withdrew in silence.

Edgar took the boy's delicate wrist in his fingers, and counted the pulse. The woman's expression had pricked his professional conscience.

"Are you tired?" he asked uneasily.

"Not a bit," declared Kerry.

"What was it she said, my boy," Edgar asked, with his fingers still on the

wrist, "when you said you wished you could help?"

"She said, 'who wouldn't?'"

Edgar's countenance fell. That had altogether too general a significance.

"Was that all?" he asked.

"No, there's more," the boy declared eagerly. "She said something, I can't remember jes' what, about not knowin' you wanted to build one."

"I guess not," murmured Edgar. He sat back in his chair, his head bent, and a deep pain at his heart because he had never thought it worth while to tell her.

"She talks about you a heap," put in Kerry, shyly.

Edgar straightened himself, and looked at the sensitive and intelligent little face, hopefully.

"Can you think of something?"

"One thing," declared the boy promptly. "She said you wuz a man of God."

"Did she?" replied Edgar, dully. Gratifying that, but hardly to the point.

"She said you wuz a good doctor, too," the hopeful little voice went on.

"That was nice," was the apathetic reply. Stale and profitless this, too. But he forced a smile. The little fellow was so anxious to prove that she cared.

"Can you think of anything else?" he asked gently.

"Seems like I kin, but I can't jest remember," Kerry said slowly, puckering his brows.

"Never mind," Edgar sighed, and smoothed the puckers out with a gentle touch. Then as a suggestion, he remarked, "She didn't answer my notes, you remember."

"But she kissed one of 'em when I give it to her, I'm mos' sure!"

"Did she, really," cried Edgar joyously, almost leaping from his chair.

Here the door opened again, and the same nurse appeared.

"I thought you called," she apologized, for Dr. Marsh turned a cold stare upon her.

"I did not," he said incisively.

"Excuse me, sir," she replied in the queerest of voices, and closed the door behind her.

The nurse thought it strange that he was holding a prolonged conversation with a patient so recently operated upon. Of course she could not know that to talk of the Wonder Lady was not fatiguing, or exciting; that it gave one courage and strength and hope. Nevertheless, Edgar got out his thermometer and slipped it

under Kerry's tongue, so that he could talk no more for the present.

While he waited, Edgar sat gazing through the window at the mountain: but he did not see the sunlight on its top. His sudden hope at Kerry's last speech had faded. If she cared enough for him to kiss a senseless piece of paper, why in heaven's name had she thought it necessary to hide from him? Kerry must have been mistaken.

When it was time, Edgar removed the thermometer and looked at it. The boy's temperature was normal, as he knew it would be.

"You said you were not sure?" he questioned softly.

"It looked like that," said Kerry. "I couldn't see exactly. Her back was sorter turned to me. But I'm mos' sure!"

"I guess you were mistaken," murmured Edgar. "She wouldn't have come to the operation if you had not sent for her. She said so."

That was disheartening, even to Kerry. He was silent, gazing wistfully at his friend's gloomy face. Then he brightened.

"But she wrote me to give you some of the roses," he piped, exultingly, "an' they are the kind you like, too."

"True," Edgar agreed. "Thank you for reminding me," and he patted the child's fair head. "It is something to dream about anyhow. And now, before I go, here's something to put you to dreaming again. If I don't get that hospital it won't be my fault."

It was a bold promise, thought he; but if Felicia did not love him he must find a way to win her love. After all, it was

foolish to imagine that she despised him. To imagine her capable of such a feeling was to impute evil to her. He was through imputing evil to Felicia. Even her presidency of " The Helpers of Joy " — the fact hardest to fit in her identity with the Wonder Lady — had taken on a soft and whimsical light. It was one human side to her, which was lucky for him. Otherwise, she would have been altogether beyond his reach. She had seemed so half an hour ago. But now — he glanced down again at the white rose: what did it mean? That she recognized the lover of the Wonder Lady? That she would recognize the lover of Felicia? This exquisite doubt had too stiletto-like a quality to be endured. He resolved to offer himself to Felicia that very night.

CHAPTER XIX

DR. MARSH PROPOSES

TWO hours later, his aunt's fortune had become a matter of such indifference to Edgar that he was perfectly willing for the cats to have it — that is, a part of it. This reservation, the most ardent lover of cats would allow a surgeon giving so freely of his practice to the children of the poor. For his hospital, however, means had suddenly been provided by an event not to be called unexpected, since it was directly consequent to his work and character.

Half an hour after the operation on Kerry, Dr. Norwell and the other physician

who assisted, started a subscription for the hospital. The paper was signed near the outset by the leading capitalist of the town, a man whose interest in the hospital had been sought previously by Edgar, because of his reputation as a liberal subscriber to public affairs. To this appeal, he failed to respond, possibly on account of Edgar's youth and unprofessional manner. But there was no doubting the skill, resolution, or integrity, of the man who had successfully performed the operation on Kerry. So great was the amount which the capitalist now gave, so great the influence of his name, that the success of the project was assured.

Edgar first heard of it all, when he came out upon the sidewalk from the restaurant where he usually dined. There, he met his two friends, who were just coming in

to tell him the great news. At first, he could hardly believe, and he looked to see if the old mountain was there, just to make sure. Of course it was, though a long, broad, dark line, dividing the stars from the yellowish city lights, was all that he could see. His good friends wanted to take him to the club to celebrate; but he begged them to put that off until the next evening, as now he could only shake hands, jump into his automobile, and rush off to a pressing engagement.

He did not say that this engagement was with himself to ask Miss Raeburn to marry him. They would not have understood this sudden impetuosity when he could have asked her any time in the last two years. And the event which they would consider the best of excuses for putting it off for another day, was to him

the best of reasons for not putting it off another minute.

For not to Kerry, blessed child, was his good fortune due, but to Kerry's Wonder Lady. She had inspired the letter which put the case in his hands. She had been his own inspiration, kept his interest alive, his courage renewed in face of the father's prejudice and antagonism. He had to tell her this, and a few other things before he went to bed, or lie awake all night. True, he might do that anyway; for after all, she might not accept him. The rose in his buttonhole was the only tangible evidence that she loved him. Besides, she might be too absorbed in her good works to wish to marry.

Indeed, as he thought of her — so calm, so benign, so elevated in thought and word, so full of grace and light — he wondered

how he would dare approach her with words of love. Then he reminded himself that she was president of "The Helpers of Joy," and therefore human; and ordered his chauffeur to increase the speed.

It was the first time in two years that he had gone to his aunt's house except when called to prescribe for some one of her many symptoms; or to lend an ungracious presence at the quarterly dinners required by her absurd will.

Tonight he could hardly realize that he was the gloomy, morose man who on those occasions had been dragged there by his desire for the hospital. Tonight, the sweet June air fanning his cheeks was not softer than his mood — he did not have to marry Felicia in order to get the hospital, but because he wanted her; tonight, the large, golden moon, hovering on

the eastern roofs, was not larger or more golden than his hope — for by the time he reached the house, he had looked at the rose in his buttonhole so often, he was at last convinced that Felicia loved him.

He had not announced his coming. Felicia, both spiritually and materially, had been as elusive as a nymph of Diana, and if he could take her by surprise, he would.

Fortunately, he found the ladies at home, and alone. Mrs. Raeburn, in black silk, sat as usual in her high chair, engaged with her cats, one of which was cuddled in her lap, while sundry others played about her on the carpet.

Edgar's unexpected appearance, his air of happy assurance, equally unexpected, caused the old lady, in spite of her rheumatic joints, to rise from her chair without

assistance. The cat in her lap set his claws into her skirt, and finding that hold precarious, tumbled to the floor, unnoticed by his mistress. In her astonishment, she gazed at her nephew with a look so kind, so fond, as to almost beautify her rugged, arrogant features.

To his disappointment, Felicia showed no surprise. From her low chair by a window, where apparently she had been watching the moon, she arose quickly, but in a manner so calm, so queenly, so passionless, that he wondered at the tricks his imagination had been playing him. Above her gown of a delicate pink muslin, her face gleamed with flower-like beauty amid the dull grays and drabs of the room; but to judge by her expression, a flower utterly beyond his reach. Nor did it avail to think of the rose in his button-

hole, nor of the "Helpers of Joy;" for as her eyes met his, her dark, level brows drew together in a heavy frown.

Before he could speak, his aunt, having recovered from her surprise, croaked with half a sneer:

"Well, what is going to happen?"

"This is going to happen," he retorted, and kissed her hand; "I am going to take Felicia out on the verandah for a talk."

"Felicia!" Mrs. Raeburn gasped, and dropped heavily into her chair; "Felicia!" she gasped again, at this sudden and unexplained familiar use of the girl's name — which, indeed, had escaped Edgar in his confusion. "Felicia?" She turned, demanding explanation of her.

But Felicia had vanished through the window.

This was the shortest way to the ve-

randah. If she had not frowned, Edgar would have taken courage, but now he was full of doubt as he hurried after her.

In the moonlight, just outside, she stood, smiling the welcome she had denied him within.

"I am so glad you came," she whispered. "I have been anxious to know if there were any ill effects after the operation."

"That is what I came — that — no," he stammered, his head in a whirl. "I came to tell you of good effects."

"I want to hear all about it," she said quietly. "Let us sit over here." She led the way to a bench at the farther end of the verandah. It was the bench he would have chosen — out of ear-shot of Mrs. Raeburn; and where the moonlight, unobstructed, fell bright enough to read

"I AM SO GLAD YOU CAME," SHE WHISPERED.—*Page 244.*

any hint of emotion that the girl's face might betray. But her belated graciousness was too evidently on account of the sick boy. Edgar sat down in silence, looking, not at her, but at the lights gleaming through the mists that lay over the city below.

The shrill voice of a tree frog, the thin clangor of cicadas, vibrated from the maple trees on the lawn. Far, but clear and sweet, rang the call of "Bob — Bob White," from some recess on the mountain. Confused and dim, the city noises floated up. A soft wind drifted by, freighted with the odor of white roses which overran the other end of the verandah. Edgar looked down at the rose in his buttonhole. Then he looked at Felicia. At the same instant, she turned her face to him in gentle inquiry.

"You say that no ill effects followed the operation?" she prompted. Her face shone so fair and soft in the moonlight, he could but respond cheerfully, though the interest *was* all for Kerry.

"None whatever," he said. "It was a wonderful operation in its effects, not only for the boy, but for me." He hesitated, and looked at her uneasily. "I never told you," he continued regretfully, "of my desire to build a hospital for children — I — I — did not know until this afternoon that you were interested in such things."

"Tell me about it now," she urged, in a tone void of any sense of injury. For a moment, he could not speak. At this new proof of her essential nobility of spirit, his love threatened to overflow both the fear and the prudence which had been enjoined upon him by that frown.

"It is soon told now" — he said gravely — "that is, the main thing. This afternoon, two of my friends started a subscription for the hospital, and because of this operation, they were enabled, within two hours, to raise sufficient funds to make the hospital a certainty."

"How splendid!" she exclaimed in her lovely, warm voice. "How glad I am, how glad!"

He was silent again. The noisy tinkle of a piano in the next house jarred upon the night; but pleasanter to him it was than this sympathy, for which he had once longed. It was sympathy for himself, not for his hospital, that he wanted now. He stared gloomily past her at the lights of the house glimmering through the trees, but he saw her just the same. She had plucked a leaf from a geranium on the

stand at her side, and was softly touching her lips with it, in the most tantalizing manner. But she darted a glance or two at him; and then, as if she divined his grievance, she exclaimed softly: —

"What a tribute to you! but you deserve it." She looked at him with an unreserved admiration, which, though evidently an admiration merely for his surgeon's skill, made him ashamed of his selfish ill humor.

"I owe it all to you," he confessed warmly. "Indeed I do," he insisted, because of her protesting gesture. "If you had not trained the boy's will and his courage, and in that way strengthened his nerves, and if you had not come this afternoon, we could not have operated. And you helped me, too, all through the weeks before, though I did

not know who you were — I felt your sympathy — "

He checked himself abruptly. With her hands folded in her lap, she sat perfectly still, gazing at the lights beyond the trees, as though listening to the jangle of the piano and not to him. Idiot that he was, to presume on her sympathy, on her benevolence! What had he to build his hope upon anyhow? A wilted rose in his buttonhole.

Felicia had turned, and was looking at that fragile chrysalis of his hope, with a little whimsical smile, which might as well have been another frown.

"I am glad if I have been of help," she said distinctly; then stole a glance at his forlorn countenance. "I saw — " she hesitated, lifted the geranium leaf to her lips, looked at him again, then hurriedly

went on; "I saw that you were full of news when you came in. I was afraid you would speak of it before Aunt Lucy. She would publish me from the house-tops. That is why I frowned."

"Oh, was it really?" he cried in delight.

"Why, what did you think?" she asked.

"That you were sorry to see me," he faltered.

"Why, I was glad to see you. I am always glad to see you," she replied, very low.

He looked at her doubtfully, searching a deeper meaning than he could read in her words. He found none. Her face was bent over the geranium leaf with an intentness worthy of an Asa Gray over a new orchid.

"I have something else to tell you," he began, hesitatingly. Then he drew a long

breath — "Now or never," he thought — and plunged ahead:

"It is that I love you. I may not have acted like it, but I think I have loved the real you all the time — the beauty, the grace that I saw in you, the kindness and love I imagined another's. I sometimes fancied that the Wonder Lady might learn to care for me — sometimes that you would — it was presumption — but I — well — this afternoon when I found that you are you, I was in despair. It did not seem possible that you, knowing me so well, should ever care for me. Then came the white roses for Kerry — and one for me — and — perhaps this is presumption too —" She was so very still that the white rose in his buttonhole had suddenly become a spray of edelweiss on Mont Blanc. But he went on desperately. "I

took that as a sign that you would listen — that even though you should not care — I thought you might listen — " he ended, his voice in air. Truly, he had been a fool to dream that she could at once invest the man he had been to her with the qualities of an acceptable lover!

There was a brief silence, then she looked up at him, with her soft dove's eyes.

" I am listening," she said.

Only three words, but for an instant they blotted out time and space. He smelled the perfume of violets, and saw his mother standing amid her flower beds, and heard her patient voice replying to a child's broken plea: — " I am listening." She had been lost to him these many years. But lo! here for his keeping, was the same sweetness, patience, and serene dignity. Tears came into his eyes.

"Beloved," he whispered, and took her soft hands in his, "can it be that you love me?"

"It is true," she said. "I have loved you a long time."

"Ah, my dearest," he drew her nearer, gazing deep into her sweet, clear eyes. "Why have you hid yourself from me in such a manner, giving me no chance at all to know you?"

"I thought you disliked me," she said.

"But did you not see that I loved the Wonder Lady?"

"I wasn't sure," laughed Felicia, softly.

"Not even when I asked for white roses? It was cruel of you to bring them mixed," he complained tenderly. "If you only knew what a time I've had trying to decide whether to marry the cold,

haughty Miss Raeburn, or the dear and gracious Winifred Beach."

"Winifred Beach!" exclaimed the girl, to his surprise; and drew away from him with sudden hauteur.

"Why, that was the name on your card," he protested, "which a poor boy pushed under my nose one day." Oddly enough, he suddenly recalled Mrs. Althea Dale's suspicions about the Wonder Lady's name.

Felicia was laughing at him again, but her glance was adorable.

"And you thought it one I had assumed? I suppose that is natural. It was not my card. I would never have taken another person's name."

"Then there is such a person?" he asked, in a doubtful tone.

"Certainly," Felicia replied. "She is one of us," and she laughed again at his

mystified look. "One of the 'Helpers of Joy,'" she explained. Then she gently added: "Have you never read this in Holy Writ—'Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy?'"

So confirmed was he in his belief of a social club, that for a short interval, he stared as blankly as perhaps the Greeks did at the Apostle who presented a new strange way of joy.

"A benevolent society!" he exclaimed at last. "And I never dreamed it of you."

"No, you thought me the most frivolous of girls," she teased, with a laugh at his remorseful countenance.

"But you sang such frivolous songs," he pleaded.

"But you were so deadly serious,"

she retorted, then suddenly bubbled over. "Don't!" she laughed. "You look just as you did at those dinners."

"I don't think you ought to laugh at me. It was all the fault of the cats," he complained, then laughed, himself. "It seems to me," he presently continued, and not without some feeling, "that the strange manner in which your club does its work is apt to produce strange complications."

"That depends," said Felicia with a provoking sigh. "None of the others have had such complications as mine."

"Thank heaven!" said Edgar fervently, "that your complications, and mine too, are simplified — to this." He suddenly took her face between his hands, and kissed her.

THE END.